IronWatch
Issue
04

Staff

Aaron Leahy — "Sardonic Wolf"
Alex Visentin — "reVenAnt"
Austin Peasley — "darkPrince010"
Bil — "Orcsbain"
Boris Samec — "Thane Bobo"
Chris Livingstone— "stlwarrior"
"Cornonthecob"
Doug Newton-Walters — "Hellebore"
"Dusty"
E. McIlraith — "Crow"
"imm0rtal reaper"
Jack Evans — "ManticfanboyLAD"
John Hoyland— "katzbalger"
Jonathan Hicks — "jontheman"
"left64"
"Maccwar"
Mark Smith — "scarletsquig"
Matt Gilbert — "mattjgilbert"
Matthäus Mieczkowski — "Max Jet"
Matt I. — "JoV"
Maxwell McDougall — "Lord Marcus"
Michael DeFranco —"MDSW"
"Nathan"
Neil Dixon
"Osbad"
Pete Kijek — "Pathfinder Pete McF"
"puggimer"
Ryan Shaw — "The Dire Troll"
Sharad Vora
Shane Baker — "Shaneimus"
"Skolo"
Stuart Smith — "Merlin"

Cover art by Boris Samec
Title art by Mark Smith

ABYSSAL TIDINGS

A Message from the Editor

Happy Holidays from all of us here at IRONWATCH magazine!

We're excited to have a wonderful set of articles this time around, and superb pictures to go with them. I'd like to extend my deepest thanks to all of you who have sent us the pictures of your miniatures.. Thanks to your efforts, the only two articles containing official Mantic pictures instead of fan-painted miniatures are for the Dreadball stories, and those models haven't even been released yet!

However, we're always looking for more material to help us continually improve this magazine, so if you're interested, please send us any pictures of your own miniatures or even your own articles or tutorials, and we'd be happy to include them in **your** fan magazine. Just look for our threads on the Mantic Forums for more information.

Thanks again for reading, and for all you new readers out there, welcome to the Watch!

-Austin

Please note that, while we here at **Ironwatch** *attempt to deliver you the best products and ideas we can, we cannot guarantee the balance of any scenarios or special rules presented herein. If you find any errors, grammar mistakes, or rule imbalances, please contact us on the Mantic Forums (Look for the discussion labeled "Ironwatch Issue X Feedback") and let us know what we could do to improve your fan-produced magazine. If you are interested in writing, illustrating, or editing for our magazine, please let us know on the feedback discussion as well so you can get in on the action!*

All models used in this publication are from the respective author's own personal collections, and any models displayed herein are not intended to challenge the status of the copyrights of their respective owners. All rights are reserved to their respective owners.

Corrections:

The first name for contributors Sharad Vora was incorrectly spelled. We apologize for the error.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Exclusive: Dreadball Advertisement Competition 4

Tân-y-loar Part I, by Matt Gilbert 5

Magic in Mantica, by Doug Newton-Walters 14

Sage Advice and Random Musings, by Bil 22

Pathfinder: Clash of Kings Update, by Matt Gilbert 25

The Owl and the Blade,: Part Three, by John Hoyland 33

Dwarf Command Tent, by Stuart Smith 40

Whither Sailed Those Ships?, by Michael Grey 43

Warpath: Space Battles, by Pete Jones 47

The Wiley Old Man Returns, by Lee Montgomery 55

Lazarus, by Michael Grey 64

APPENDIX:

Magic in Mantica Spell Cards 75

UPCOMING NEWS FROM MANTIC GAMES!

Ironwatch Exclusive Competition: Help design advertisements for Dreadball!

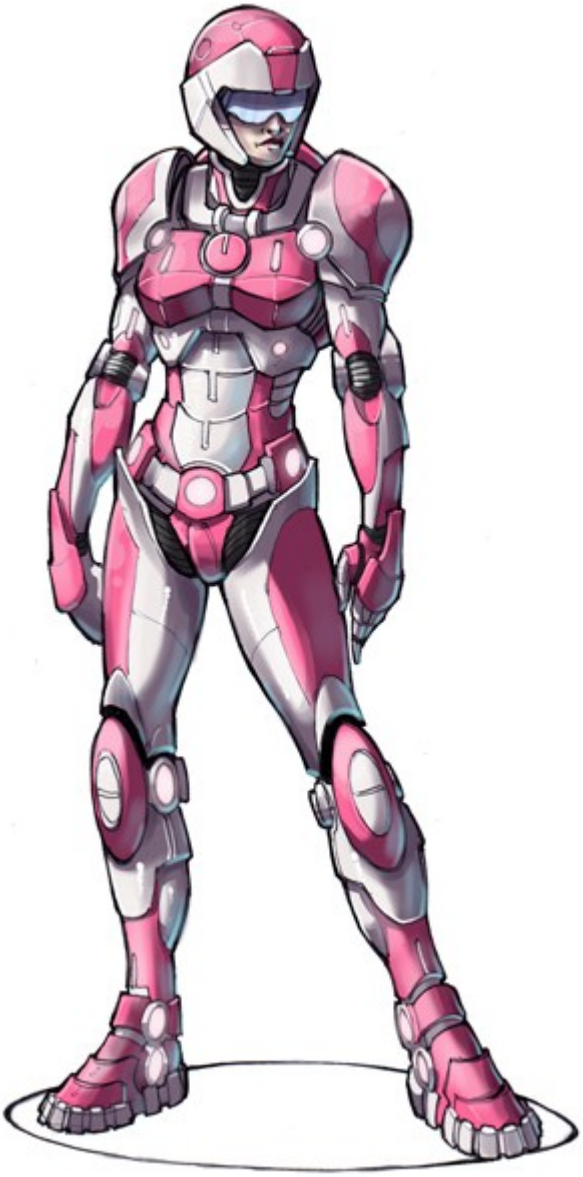
Mantic has requested that we here at Ironwatch announce a brand-new competition!

Mantic is looking for submissions of fake advertisements for the sport of Dreadball, in -universe representations such as posters, holo-adverts, and so on!

Submit your designs to Mantic via

chris.palmer@manticgames.com

and the winning advertisement will be featured on the new website Dreadball.com! Be sure to enter, and may the best advert win!▪



Void Siren Corporation Dreadball Team
By Mantic Games. Used with Permission

Locust City Zz'or Dreadball Team
By Mantic Games, Used with Permission

Tân-y-loar

By Matt Gilbert

"THANK YOU CHILD. An old man like me likes simple comforts."

"And here's your blanket Ur-pa."

"You are a good girl. Now, it's nearly the hour of the Wolf. The light is failing and you should be in your bed before the People come for you. Now don't giggle girl, the People are not some childish fancy. They are real. They are dangerous. I have seen them."

"Is that what they look like Ur-pa? They look strange. They don't look real".

"They are real enough my dear and yes, that carving on the wall there is a good likeness. Yes, take it down and hold it in your hands. That's it, careful now. See how lovingly the figure has been carved from the wood. Close your eyes. Can you feel it? It feels alive, like the carving has sustained the wood and life still flows through its core."

"How do you know about the Faery People Ur-pa? You've never left the village".

"Ho ho, child you are too young to remember. Before even your father was born, I was one of our village's Trakken, tasked with guarding the annual caravans plying the trade routes between the great plains here out to Galahir and into Letharac. One year I even went so far South as Primantor on the shore and took a ship – a ship! Such a sight you've never seen and the sea – I've never seen so much water. But that is another story. We have a little time and you are old enough to stay up a while longer. So settle down and I'll tell you how it is I have seen the Fey."

THE AIR WAS cooling. Even under the trees where the temperature was reduced due to the shade, we could feel the turning of the seasons; the heat and wetness of the summer yielding to the drier, more tepid climate of the fall and the inevitable chill of winter. The visual cues were there too; the colors of the forest beginning their transition

By "Maccwar"

By Michael DeFranco

and the odd leaf here and there, drifting down to the floor to be lost amongst the roots and undergrowth. What was a canvas of green when we had arrived eight weeks previously was slowly transforming into what I knew would soon be a riot of browns, oranges, yellows and reds. I had seen the forest like it once before when I was just a boy. It is a beautiful sight to behold.

We had been delayed. The caravan Master Per Vortlek had dallied too long we felt, haggling over the value of the Ox-hides we had bought with us in exchange for iron pots and tools. The Master wanted unmade iron too in the bargain, knowing the Smiths out on the plains were always in want of fresh supplies. The elves tolerate it you see but they consider it an unclean necessity. They are happy to trade it away for the right price. Per Vortlek was an unpleasant man, but he was good at his job, and fastidious in his negotiations, ensuring he got the best for his clients and his reputation. He did well that trip, so I believe he thought the delay was worthwhile.

I had seen the forest like it once before when I was just a boy. It is a beautiful sight to behold.

We finally left Ileutherin on a cool, clear morning. Vortlek's hired and permanent caravan guards took up their positions in the train and the order was given to roll out. My father was in charge of our wagons towards the front of the train and myself and two other's from the village had made the trip as the men entrusted with the village's wealth and goods. Once the train neared our village, we would break off and complete the last leg of the journey ourselves, trusting we knew the land and the risks travelling alone entailed well enough.

By "imm0rtal reaper"

Two lithe elves had been assigned to us as an escort to see us safely through to the outskirts of the forest. The forest is a paradox: both wonderful and terrible. The maze of paths can be treacherous and lead the careless far astray. Without an escort it is a lucky man who easily finds his way through the trees. Even the widest trade routes, ploughed yearly by the traffic flow from the plains can deceive and mislead, taking the unwary deep into the darkest places. Deep into danger. They had been with us for two days, waiting impatiently to get moving but keeping themselves apart from our camp. Or at least as far apart as decorum permitted.

The forest is a paradox: both wonderful and terrible. The maze of paths can be treacherous and lead the careless far astray.

The elves spoke little to the men and never to me. I could only observe them from a distance. My father had dealt briefly with them in the past on previous trips, but this pair only conversed with Vortlek and then it seemed, only sparingly. Dressed in soft leathers that seemed to blend in and mimic the changing colors of the trees around them, they struck me as more a part of the forest than beings that dwelled within it. With long, slender bows lying across their backs, they eventually signaled for us to move out and without waiting for acknowledgement, struck out along either side of the path, leading the way.

As the wagons rolled out and began to pick up speed, Mok, a huge hulk of a man from the arid wastes to the South, hawked and spat into the undergrowth. "Haughty, skinny bastards." he sneered, "Bet they'd snap like the twigs they resemble in a fight. Think themselves too good for the likes of us". He glared ahead and began cleaning his nails with a dirty, wicked looking knife which appeared from somewhere inside his jerkin. He was a hired thug, selling his sword arm to Vortlek for the first time this year. He was distrustful, arrogant, aggressive and didn't tolerate weakness, but as some minor incidents had proved on the journey so far, could handle himself in a fight and I suppose, if you are hiring muscle, that's all that

matters.

My father glanced at me to keep quiet but Mok had irked me.

"We need them to help get us safely out of here" I said as I lead my horse alongside the train. "Besides, they've done you no harm. It is in their interests to see the trade caravans in and out the forest so providing an escort can only make sense."

"What makes you an expert, boy"? I remember the demeaning, goading emphasis on the last word just as clearly today as I heard it then. "You can't be any more than sixteen summers old, you young whelp. I bet I could snap you too with one hand".

I felt a hand placed firmly on my shoulder. My father reached down from his seat in the wagon and shook his head. "Leave us Mok. Go and bother someone else. Perhaps you'd like to tell our guides up there what you really think of them?"

You can't be any more than sixteen summers old, you young whelp. I bet I could snap you too with one hand

Mok scowled and spat again on the path in front of us, before stalking off along the line.

"Steer clear of that one boy. No point getting into trouble".

WE TRAVELLED SLOWLY for three days and it was clear our guides were getting irritated with the pace we were moving. They probably wanted to leave and be home as much as we did ourselves. I was glad they had accompanied us though, for the path we took through the trees was unfamiliar and lonely. Not another soul did we see during that time – just the colors of the vegetation to distract us from the monotony of the trek but after a while, even the majesty of the

By "Maccwar"

trees dwindled in our eyes as the path lazily rolled by under our column of trudging feet and creaking wheels. On the third evening, Per Vortlek called a halt as normal and the command rippled back down the line. My father pulled himself on to his plains-horse, a feisty and powerful piebald that would enjoy the freedom of the grassland once we finally left the forest behind us. He trotted up to the head of the train to confirm the situation and returned shortly calling out for us to make camp for the night.

Tolk was the older, almost of an age with my father. The two of them often talked fondly of times when they were children and the mischief they had shared in.

“We are close to the edge of the trees Eran. We settle here tonight and then can be a way clear of the forest edge before sunset tomorrow.” He jumped down from the saddle and handed me his reins. “Here. Water the horses and then help Weasel build the fire. Tolk and I will prepare the food”.

Weasel and Tolk were the village’s other Trakken; skilled warriors and experienced scouts and guards. Tolk was the older, almost of an age with my father. The two of them often talked fondly of times when they were children and the mischief they had shared in. Weasel was younger, but still had at least five years on me and the scars to show it. His

By Michael DeFranco

small pointed features and his knack of getting in and out of places he wasn’t wanted had earned him his nickname from a very young age. I never found out his real name. He didn’t talk much but was trusted well enough and fiercely loyal to the village. On a trade journey, where the village wealth

was in your hands, such traits were essential. A village needs to know that the men who will take what they have to sell and bring back what they purchased or bargained for will return no matter the odds. Life on the plains was harsh but trade sustained it and made it bearable, elevating the villages from their nomadic and tribal roots.

The mood in the camp was lifted that evening. The wagon drivers, guards and ancillary staff could all sense that this step of the journey was nearly over. The traipse through the forest had become monotonous but spirits were raised with the knowledge that we would soon spill out onto the plains, free from the forest in a place where we could feel the raw breeze on our faces – a feeling of liberty and the tug of home you can feel in your heart. Happy faces showed

By "imm0rtal reaper"

the glow of the campfires and at some point in the evening, after our supper, the singing started. We were an eclectic mix of cultures with songs to match. Each singer was increasingly well received and when Mok rumbled out a gruff yet surprisingly melodic ode from his homeland, even he received some cheers of encouragement such was the

Life on the plains was harsh but trade sustained it and made it bearable, elevating the villages from their nomadic and tribal roots

feeling of goodwill. As Mok finished his song there came from the furthest fire, a voice like none I had heard before, and rarely since. A second voice joined in and as the men around us fell silent, a hauntingly beautiful duet wrapped us in its gentle embrace. Tolk and my father closed their eyes and as I did too the music entered my mind and body, becoming an almost physical experience as images of ancient times and places, emotions and desires washed around me.

I don't know how long they sang for but our daydreams were harshly shattered when Mok snarled and, rising from where he sat alone, kicked at the pots at his feet, storming off into the dark of the woods and muttering under his breath. Perhaps he felt uncomfortable with what we had collectively experienced or perhaps his disdain for the elven singers eventually overcame his reverie

By "puggimer"

but his reaction broke the spell and the singing faded into the night. Silence took hold and gradually the fires were doused and the caravan settled down to sleep.

A cold, dewy day greeted us as we stirred at dawn. After a brief, cheerless breakfast, the caravan organized itself for the last leg of the journey and slowly lumbered into the wearisome pattern of the last few days. I remember little about the early hours, but at some point I was aware of something strange, something different. Others had felt it too, and up ahead I saw our guides casting furtive looks into the trees and at each other. I shivered. My father and one or two others down the line loosened the weapons in sheaths and slings. At the raise of a hand from the nearest elf, the caravan came to a halt. I could see nothing in the trees but the elves were looking West, and fingering their bows. As we sat there, the absence struck me. No sound. No sigh of wind, no rustle of leaves. No scurrying, no scrabbling, no song of any bird. The silence rang in my eardrums louder than sound it had replaced.

I had seen and heard of these foul abominations – the warped and mutated consequence of experimentation and twisted magic.

I saw the elves move split seconds before it crashed out the trees in front of them. I had seen and heard of these foul abominations – the warped and mutated consequence of experimentation and twisted magic. That mortals have conspired to willingly bring such grotesque monstrosities into the world defies belief. Born from the depths of the world and tempered with the fires of the Abyss, the huge, galloping, snarling and frenzied halfbreed thundered into the path and with one ferocious swing of its axe, cleaved the first elf cleanly in two. Not breaking stride, the fiend smashed into the closest wagon, stomping through the petrified driver the wood and the helpless

horses and driving into our other guide who took a hefty blow and fell away. As wagon wood and bones shattered it let out an almighty, sonorous, terrifying bellow. Fear gripped me then I'm not afraid to tell you. The sound that thing made as it tipped back its head and roared its challenge stirred

Waiting but a heartbeat for a clear shot, he loosed an arrow which flew true and buried itself with a snap-crump deep into the flank of the beast

something in me that was primeval: the terror of hunted prey, the despair of the weak and the hopelessness of flight.

The caravan exploded into life. Guards from all around charged in with screams and war-cries in a multitude of tongues – united in a common cause and a common revulsion. The huge double-headed axe of the Abyssal monster chopped effortlessly left and right and its hooves stomped and lashed out at whatever the axe could not reach. The thing was a furious blur of fur and muscle, metal and blood. I saw three, four, five men cut down by vicious sweeps of that dreadful blade. As it turned I saw a hideous gaping wound down one flank which looked alive with an inner fire and, even in the brief glimpse I had, decayed and festering. Perhaps this is what had driven it mad – a mortal wound that was rotting its mind as well as its body. I'll never know for sure but after all these years, that is what I believe.

As I came to my senses and started to draw my own weapon, two things happened. Our second elf guide hauled his broken body into a sitting position and drew his bow. Waiting but a heartbeat for a clear shot, he loosed an arrow which flew true and buried itself with a snap-crump deep into the flank of the beast. It roared in pain and reared up in an attempt to locate its tormentor but then out of nowhere it seemed, came Mok.

Bellowing his own cry Mok swung his huge blade in a scything diagonal sweep. The beast barely raised its own parry in time, the two weapons meeting with a bone shuddering impact. The two of them exploded into a bewildering and brutal conflict and we watched amazed at the

By "Maccwar"

strength and skill Mok displayed as he matched the hacking and slashing of the Abyssal while still managing his own attacks and counters. They fought like Titans and time slowed as we watched in horrified fascination; Death prowled the scene, watching for a mistake, a weakness: so one might fall – as must surely happen.

The monster screamed and I covered my ears the sound was so painful – a cacophony of spite, anguish, pain and suffering

The Abyssal made the error, overstretching with an arcing swipe. Mok dropped and rolled under the swinging blade and cut his own across the open, livid wound in the beast's side. The monster screamed and I covered my ears the sound was so painful – a cacophony of spite, anguish, pain and suffering. It instinctively lashed out with its front leg, the hoof smashing into Mok's helmet and crushing his face and skull. The big man crumpled to the ground, the strings of life severed; the violent animation which had consumed his body extinguished forever.

A cry of despair rang out from the men and we all moved to fell the creature. But it seemed it had no stomach left or was too much in pain as it launched itself from the wreckage of the wagon and crashed through the man nearest to it as it made for the trees once more. The man stood no chance and was mercilessly cut down where he stood, the body trampled under the hammer blows of the beast's legs as it passed into the darkness. The numbness and shock hit me first but they rapidly dissolved into loathing and without thinking I kicked my horse into life and plunged into the forest after the creature.

"No Eran!" Tolk cried after me. "Stop, stop!"

The man had been my father.

END OF PART I

By Michael DeFranco

Magic in Mantica

By Doug Newton-Walters

Magic takes on many forms in Mantica. From the fiery conflagrations of the Dwarven Warsmiths to the icy touch of the minions of Winter, magic permeates the world.

The following is an expanded set of rules for magic in Kings of War. It adds more complexity and variety to the current magical rules and provides the ability to modify magic users in the Kings of War army lists.

Advanced Wizardry

For the purposes of these rules, the following are the only units that can use them. Any other unit with magical abilities retains their standard rules. A unit may only take a spell once. The spells that follow are broken up into Lores and a caster may only take spells from the Lores indicated below.

Each of these units has had any Heal (n), Zap (n) and Breath Attack (n) special rule removed from their profile. Their cost has been adjusted accordingly. You may if you wish take the unaltered form of these units. However if you wish to give them new spells, you must use these costs and spell rules, even if a spell is worse than the standard version. This is the price of variety.

Caster	Cost	Lores	Maximum Spells
Warsmith	75	Fire	1
Iron-caster*	85	Fire, Astromancy, Spirit	2
Mage-Queen	65	Fire, Astromancy, Spirit, Nature, Ice	3
Wizard**	20	Fire, Ice, Spirit, Nature, Astromancy	3
Necromancer	65	Spirit, Ice, Necromancy	3
Wiz	35	Nature, Ice, Fire	2
High Priestess of the Abyss	50	Fire, Astromancy, Spirit, Ice	3

**Iron-casters retain their Heal (1) for war machines.*
***Pick 3 Lores to select spells from.*

By "left64"

By "puggimer"

Casting Spells

You'll notice that not all of these spells are used in the shooting phase, leaving one wondering how many can be cast. For clarity, Heroes can cast up to one spell per phase. This is basically an extension of the current rules, where you can only make one shooting attack per turn. You may choose a different target for each spell cast.

Master Wizard 20 points

Some magic users become extremely powerful, hurling spells in quick succession.

You may purchase this upgrade for any of the listed units. If a unit has taken the Master Wizard upgrade they can cast up to two different spells per phase instead of one and increase their maximum spells by one.

Magic Focus 15 points

Many magic users wield a weapon attuned to their minds, using it to store magical energies and even spells.

Gain +1 Attack and Crushing Strength (1), or if the unit already has Crushing Strength, increase it by 1. You may purchase an additional spell (including one you already have) to put into the Focus. It may be cast once per game in addition to the normal number of spells you may cast.

Orcs

It's unusual for an orc to develop magical aptitude. They just aren't sophisticated enough. However there are those half casts born with the magical heritage of one parent that can draw on it in a limited fashion.

If you wish, you can upgrade a Flagger to a Half Cast. Half Casts lose their Inspiring rule and choose a single lore (not Necromancy) that they have access to. They may take a single spell at the cost indicated.

Necromancy

This vile art is the product of ceaseless experimentation. It is the unholy corruption of nature magic with spirit magic, channelling the life-giving energies of nature into the lifeless void of undeath. Where the undead walk nature withers and dies, its energies drained to feed their endless hunger.

Warsmiths

The few dwarfs capable of magic become warsmiths. Their fiery souls channel the flames of their goddess, giving them an insight into smelting and industry second to none. Some warsmiths will take their fire magic to the battlefield, smashing their enemies to cinders with burning hammers, or razing regiments to the ground.

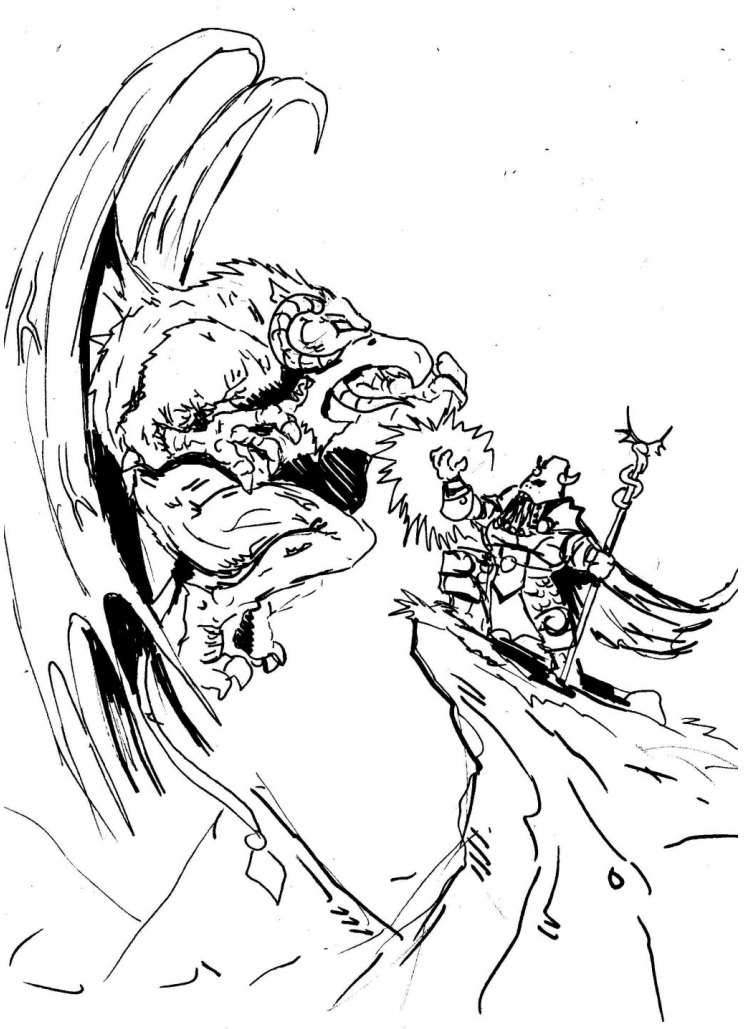
Notes

For spells that affect an enemy unit during their own turn, place the spell card next to the affected unit to help remind you.
You can place the number of re-rolls for Curse on the card to indicate to your opponent how many they will have to make.

<u>Fire Lore</u>

Fireball 25pts
Phase: Shoot
Fiery beams of energy shoot from the caster's hands, incinerating all in their path.
Roll 5 dice for this ranged attack rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This attack has a range of 24", always hits on 4+ (regardless of modifiers) and is Piercing (1).

Burning Blade 15pts
Phase: Melee
Like the scream of a furnace the caster's weapon bursts explosively into flame.
Roll 1D6 when you activate the caster in the Melee phase but before making attacks. On a 3+ the caster gains 1 additional attack with the Blast (1D6+1) rule.



By Boris Samec

Flame Burst 25pts
Phase: Shoot
Roiling flame spews from the caster's mouth, sending the enemy shrieking in pain.
Roll 8 dice for this ranged attack rather than the Attacks value of the unit. This attack has a range of 12" and always hits on 4+, regardless of any modifier.

Molten Curse 30pts
Phase: Move
Cinders fly as the caster spits out a sulphurous curse, melting enemy weapons.
Roll 1D6 after issuing the caster orders. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 12" suffers -1 to

damage on melee and ranged attacks until the beginning of your next turn.

Blazing Slag 30pts
Phase: Move
Unnatural heat infuses enemy armour, burning them as the caster's allies strike.
Roll 1d6 after issuing the caster orders. On a 3+, all attacks against one enemy unit within 12" gains +1 to Melee and Ranged damage until the beginning of your next turn.

Ice Lore

Ice Gale 20pts
Phase: Melee
An unnatural sleet storm forces the enemy backwards.
Roll 1D6 at the end of your Melee Phase. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 12" is moved 1D6+1" away from the caster (maintaining facing).

By "Dusty"

Freeze 25pts
Phase: Shoot
Creeping ice grips the foe, freezing their blood and slowing their movements.
Roll 5 dice rather than using the unit's Attacks value. It has a range of 24", always hits on 4+ (ignoring modifiers) and reduces the target's Speed by 1 per die until your next turn.

Hailstorm 30pts
Phase: Shoot
Icicles of dark ice rain from the sky, impaling and tearing the foe apart.
Attacks value. It has a range of 12"-24", always hits on 4+ (ignoring modifiers) and is Piercing (1). You may target a unit you can't see, but you need 5+ to hit.

Hoar Frost 20pts
Phase: Melee
Blade-sharp crystals sprout around the caster's allies, impaling the advancing enemy.
Roll 1D6 at the end of your Melee Phase. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" counts as defending an obstacle from all directions until the beginning of your next turn.

Darkvoid 35pts
Phase: Move
All heat drains from the air, enveloping the enemy in a freezing darkness.
Roll 1D6 at the end of your Move Phase. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 24" receives an additional -1 to hit.

Astromancy Lore

Mirage 35pts
Phase: Shoot
The foe fights themselves in panic as ephemeral foes drift amongst them.
Roll 1 die rather than using the unit's attack value. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 12" inflicts 1D6 attacks on themselves in melee.

Witch Eye 20pts
Phase: Move
The caster's second sight grants their allies unearthly accuracy.
Roll 1D6 at the end of your Move Phase. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 6" receives the indirect fire rule until the beginning of your next turn.

Scry 25pts
Phase: Move
The future is laid bare before the caster, granting their allies uncanny luck.
Roll 5 dice at the end of your Move Phase. Each 4+ grants one friendly unit within 6" one re-roll to attack or damage in melee and at range until the beginning of your next turn. Choose after they roll.

Curse 25pts
Phase: Melee
A vile epithet flies from the caster's lips, sending the enemy reeling.
Roll 5 dice at the end of your Melee Phase. Each 4+ forces one enemy unit within 6" to re-roll one attack or damage roll in melee and at range until the beginning of your next turn. Choose after they roll.

Ether Bolt 30pts
Phase: Shoot
Starlight arcs down, drawn to the heavy armour of the foe.
Roll 1 die rather than using the unit's attack value. On a 4+ one enemy unit within 48" takes 1D6+1 hits. Only damage rolls that roll under the target's Defence cause damage.

By Michael DeFranco

By "left64"

Nature Lore

Heal 30pts
Phase: Shoot
Soothing energy fortifies the caster's allies, repairing their minds and bodies.
Roll 3 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This attack can only target friendly units (even in melee), has a range of 12", always hits on 4+ and each hit removes 1 point of damage.

Invigorate 25pts
Phase: Shoot
The vitality of the wild fills the troops, spurring them on.
Roll 4 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This may only target friendly units, has a range of 12", always hits on 4+ and each hit moves the unit straight forward 1" (an enemy unit touched is Charged).

Wild Wrath 35pts
Phase: Melee
The forest's anger manifests as slashing roots and vines, tearing at the foe.
Roll 1D6 at the beginning of your Melee Phase. On a 3+ any enemy unit that moves within 6" of the caster counts as moving into a Living Forest until the beginning of your next turn.

Wolf's Fang 25pts
Phase: Melee
The primal force of the predator sends the caster's allies into a frenzy.
Roll 5 dice at the beginning of your Melee Phase. This may only target friendly units (even in melee), has a range of 6", always hits on 4+ and each hit grants the target 1 additional attack for that phase.

Hawk's Speed 20pts
Phase: Move
The caster instils their comrades with lightning fast avian reflexes.
Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" may perform a free Change Facing order and does not count as having Flanks or a Rear until the beginning of your next turn.

Spirit Lore

Soul Shrive 30pts
Phase: Shoot
Insubstantial blades cut through the enemy's soul.
Roll 3 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This attack has a range of 12" and each 4+ rolled inflicts 1 point of damage on the target, ignoring defence.

Drain 25pts
Phase: Melee
The enemy's fighting strength is drawn from their bodies.
Roll 5 dice at the end of your Melee Phase. Each 4+ removes one attack from an enemy unit within 6" until the beginning of your next turn.

Bolster 15pts
Phase: Melee
Allied spirits are boosted by the caster's power.
Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" causes a -1 modifier on any Nerve tests made against it until the beginning of your next turn. This is in addition to any other modifiers.

Shroud 35pts
Phase: Move
Allied troops are briefly concealed in the spirit realm.
Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" is removed from the table (leave a marker), returning to the same place at the beginning of your next turn, moving as little as possible.

Terrorize 25pts
Phase: Move
Soul-sapping energy cuts through the enemy, sending them running or killing them on the spot.
Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ roll a Nerve test on one enemy unit within 6". This is in addition to any Nerve tests it may have to make during the rest of the turn.

<u>Necromancy Lore</u>

Reanimate e 30pts
Phase: Shoot
Plants whither and animals die as the caster powers the corpses of the dead.
Roll 3 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This attack can only target friendly units (even in melee), has a range of 12", always hits on 4+ and each hit removes

By "Maccwar"

1 point of damage.

Dark Surge 35pts
Phase: Shoot
The caster drives their minions forward by force of will.
Roll 8 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This may only target friendly Shambling units, has a range of 12" and each hit moves the unit straight forward 1" (an enemy unit touched is Charged).

By "imm0rtal reaper"

Corpse Bomb 15pts
Phase: Melee
Concentrating corrupted energy in his minions, the caster causes them to explode, killing the enemy.
Roll 1D6 at the beginning of your Melee Phase. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" suffers 1D6 damage and inflicts the same number of Crushing Strength (1) hits on one enemy unit in melee with them.

Resurrection 40pts
Phase: Move
As the enemy are slaughtered the caster's power increases allowing him to create new forces on the battlefield.
Mark the caster for each enemy unit Routed within 12" (max 3). Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders (using up all markers). 1 marker = 6+, 2 = 5+, 3 = 4+. Success creates a Skeleton Troop within 12" of the caster, which acts as normal.

Death Snare 25pts
Phase: Move
The enemy are attacked by the corpses of their own comrades as they fall to the ground.
Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 12" suffers an additional attack hitting on 5+ for each point of damage they suffer until the beginning of your next turn. Roll when the damage is caused.

Please see the Appendix to find printable cards for each of these spells and lores, so you have a quick reference during your own games! In addition, we've included blank spell cards for each of the lores, so you can make your own spells!▪

Sage advice and random musings

Hobby chatter from a hairy old gamer.

This month I thought I'd write about my recent (and first) visit to Tabletop Nation in Essex and my experience with the new game on the mantic block, having had my first taste of it at the Mantic Dreadball Day on the 10th of November.

You'll have to forgive me if this gets a little vague at times as I work shifts and the night before the trip I was working so I was in fact awake (in the end) for aver 29 hours straight and I think it was only the free coffee and sugary snacks that were keeping me going till I got my second wind in the afternoon.

To start with I found TTN easy to find from my googlemap and it was just under an hour from my door to theirs. Luckily my wife decided that I would be in no fit state to drive by the end of the day and drove me there and back.

The customised acrylic board

By Neil Dixon

Upon arrival I grabbed a coffee a had a little look about to see what was what, TTN itself is roomy, bright and clean but then it should be as its still relatively new. There were quite a few tables set up for miniatures games as well as one long one split in half for Mantic to demo Kings of War and Warpath (both of which I played), but the main attraction was Dreadball and there were plenty of tables to get playing on as well as some painted examples of the new teams and MVP's alongside some new artwork and sketches from the open day and even a limited edition refbot to buy.

It was whilst checking out the art & miniatures table noticed that there was the full blown rulebook on the table, and I have to say it's really nice. The rulebook is well laid out and has some great artwork and is clear and concise, I didn't take in too much other than I was really looking forward to getting my own copy from my kick starter deal and having a good read through to properly absorb the rules.

Speaking of which, after checking out the rulebook I got down to business and had a quick run through of the game with Chris, from what I can remember it seemed to be the "standard" way of teaching the game and starts off with only a few "rushes" left in the game. I played the Corporation team and other than a very rough grasp of the game mechanics I don't remember too much about that particular match, other than just how slick it plays. I like the way the game handles the die and the fact that you don't "reset" after a team scores, so you really need to think ahead to after you have

Forge Fathers laying down a hailstorm of fire in a Warpath 2.0 demo

By Neil Dixon

scored, and I think this will catch some players out the first couple of rushes played.

After the intro game ended, I helped myself to another coffee (can you see a pattern emerging yet?) and mingled some more before deciding to play the new warpath edition. Now I have to say that I love Mantic games, but I am predominantly a KoW player, and to be honest I feel that the current or what I call 0.2 version is a little rushed. There are some glaring errors in the rulebook as well as some important omissions in the army lists like heroes for the Forgefathers or Marauders. That's not to say I didn't enjoy the game, I just feel that the book needed a little longer before releasing to thoroughly dot all the "i"s and cross all the "t"s as it were.

After that I broke off for more caffeine and a choccybar before getting a thrashing from pathfinder Matt at the Kings of War table. I have a huge dwarf army already but haven't used them for KoW suffice to say that they play a lot different to my undead.

After this I grabbed another hot drink, and having bumped into pathfinder Festung::Plaza earlier I took up his offer of a "proper" all in game of Dreadball, playing from the start and utilising the event cards, this time I chose to play Orx. And I have to say he was most obliging, pointing out some of the consequences of the plays I was pondering and even letting 4 or 5 of his players pretend to die just so I had a better chance of winning. In short it was a most enjoyable game and in the end it came down to sudden death so it was a real nail biter. I thought that the addition of the cards really adds a great element to the game and very neatly also provides movement for the refbot if you are using her as well as providing a randomizer if an event needs to be played on a member of your team, all on

Undead dice rolls are not going their way as they strike at the heart of the Dwarf gunline in Kings of War

By Neil Dixon

the turn of a single card.

So to sum up, TTN is definitely worth a visit or perhaps book up a table and have a day out with your mates, shopping online is well and good but we wouldn't be where we are now if it wasn't for actual bricks and mortar shops, so go support them. And Dreadball is going to be huge! It's different from any other sports game I have played, it's quick, easy to learn (even if you have had no sleep) and most importantly there is plenty yet to come.

Don't forget if you have any thoughts or comments you can contact me via my orcsbain handle on the mantic forums but for now remember the objective of the game is to win, the point of the game is to have fun. The two should never be confused.

TTFN
-Bil

Dreadball in full swing

By Neil Dixon

PATHFINDER CLASH OF KINGS UPDATE

Mantic Pathfinders with introduction by Matt Gilbert

It all started with an email from Mr. Chris Palmer. The date was May 10th 2012.

"As part of our upcoming promotion for the re-launch of Kings of War in June, we want to run a Tale of Four Gamers-esque feature on our blog.

On the 9th/10th February 2013 we'll be running the next Kings of War tournament at Maelstrom Games. We'd like you guys to build up a new Kings of War army, and report on how you go about building and painting it.

Please use a monthly budget of £25 from which you can choose anything from the Kings of War line. This gives you a budget of £200 for the army all together, plus the £30 starter army (which you'd get in the first month to start you off). Any of the budget you don't use will not rollover to the next month, so choose wisely!"

There was a brief moment of pandemonium as everyone immediately chose Abyssal Dwarfs, but being the mature and diplomatic group of souls that we are, such matters were smoothly negotiated and everyone settled in to start planning their "chosen" armies. I myself was pretty sure of one thing from the outset though - there was no way I was going to be doing pansy elves.

So where are we today, six months on and well past the half-way mark? Well we've lost a few along the way (one even escaped the world of Pathfinding to go and work full-time for Mantic. Really, he was just lagging so far behind in painting he needed a way out and he saw the chance and went for it. Slacker). The Pathfinders still scouting the trail are here to give their thoughts on where they are up to with the challenge. Over to them then…

Pete Kijek (Abyssal Dwarfs)

Clash of Kings is but a few short months away now (3 months, to be precise) so it seemed appropriate to provide a summary of how everything has gone so far. As those of you who follow my blog on the Mantic Forum (Pathfinder Pete McF) will be aware, since the end of May, I and my fellow Pathfinders have been building brand new KoW armies in readiness for the tournament,

and knowing back then that there was a plethora of gorgeous new Abyssal Dwarf pieces due for release (specifically the Abyssal Halfbreeds regiment and the Angkor Mortar, the Slave Orcs and the Grog Mortar) how could I NOT put together 1800pts of the angry stunted ones? Well, it would be rude not to! *[Matt: we were all so nice to you allowing you to have them :)]*

Collecting the Abyssal Dwarves has been an absolute blast so far. From the highs of constructing the army list itself and getting each month's purchase fall on my doormat, to the nights lying awake agonising over how to create my own bespoke Lesser Obsidian Golems and perfecting my tactics- every challenge has thus far been met and overcome with my trademark bouncy, cheerful optimism that many of you will have either witnessed or experienced first-hand at the recent Open Day or the BattleMasters Tournament 2012 in Loughborough.

For those of you who know me, you'll know painting those gorgeous Mantic miniatures is my first love, and painting my army has been a real labour of love. In actual fact, it was the colour scheme that informed the background of my army, along with a healthy dose of inspiration from the Banned and the Banished series of fantasy novels written by James Clemens. The more astute of you will also have noticed that unlike my comrades in the Pathfinder ranks, I have actually been keeping on top of my painting deadlines, and in fact had half my total army complete by the end of month one!! Hence why whilst everyone else has been panicking about getting models painted, I've been able to start work on my Enforcers for Warpath! And everyone's reaction to my Abyssal Dwarves has been awesome, and really spurred me on to greater heights! *[Matt: Greater heights with Dwarfs…]*

So, where to now? Well, another ten Halfbreeds and another Angkor Mortar complete the 1800pts, but I do also want a Regiment of Slave Orcs, should any practice games show I need cannon fodder instead of anything already included in my list. Having

extra options will never be a bad thing, and the way I see it, with monthly budget to spare, the inclusion of an "alternate" unit should be enough to keep my prospective opponents on their toes, as they'll never be quite sure which units I'm bringing to Clash of Kings.

And to be perfectly honest, as long as the games are fun, and played with an awesome spirit- that's all I can hope for!

Oh, and beating David "Smurf" Symonds repeatedly, of course!!

Andy Robertson (Orcs)

At the start of the project I found myself faced with a dilemma: I wasn't a competitive gamer, I tended to go more for the hobby side of things rather than tournaments, but here I was being asked to attend a tournament. I then had to choose not only an army that I could have fun with, but make sure I didn't go too wild on my chosen pirate theme. Having done previous armies where 90% of the models were converted this was going to be a tough one for me, and while I've managed to stick to that for the majority of my orcs I have got a few custom pieces yet to be revealed in my blog. That said I'm looking forward to meeting everyone at the tournament when the project comes to a close.

Looking back at my original plan not a huge amount has really changed. Most of the miniatures have got little hints of the pirate theme though some conversions that I planned have proven beyond my expertise and after a few failed mutant parrot attempts I've had to accept defeat!

Over the past week and a half I've found myself running behind. I'm sure those of you that are parents can understand the chaos that is half term, adding to the mix I've found myself using my free evenings to prepare Dreadball miniatures for the pre-launch party at Table Top Nation on the 10th November. Now they're done though I can get cracking on the chariots that have been staring at me for the past two weeks begging me to go wild! I've been fortunate enough to have five custom made chariots produced by the company Warbases (www.warbases.co.uk) that at this time are fitting perfectly in with my theme of pirate orcs to which I wanted them to look not only unique from the current orc range but to have elements that truly stand out as individual pieces on the

table top.

So… what am I going to be doing for the closing months of the Clash of Kings project? I could use this opportunity to be a real tease and say you'll just have to keep checking my blog BUT, I'm feeling nice so here's a look at my "to do" list…

- Start and complete my Krudger on chariot, being pulled by a Sharkasaurus (feel free to search for if you're not sure what a "Sharkasaurus" is!)
- Finish the giant land boat being pulled by woolly mammoths (this will be a stand in for the fight wagon regiment)
- Glue, paint and convert twenty more Greatax to bring them up to a full horde.
- Build an orcling regiment on an overdramatized base (I'm yet to decide what this is going to look like though it will contain a palm tree or two)

I think that's about it from me, if you want to hear more about my swashbuckling orcs then check out my buccaneering blog; if not then I'll be feeding ya to the fishes.

David Symonds (Elves)

So, the Clash of Kings tournament is on the rapidly approaching horizon, and life seems determined to prevent me from being ready. Numerous factors have eaten away my free time to practically nil but still I soldier on! I'm sure that all war gamers have similar experiences. Anyway, this is not the place to complain.

So what's on the table right now? Drakons and scouts. The scouts took a knocking on the way to and from the open day, and two of their number have had to be replaced, due to snapped weapons that I can't repair. They have the capes taken from their

predecessors and will soon be painted, unit based and ready like the rest of the army.

The Drakons are a new experience for me, as I generally avoid large models, and I can't ever say that I've painted one to my satisfaction. Still, with deadlines looming I dived in, and I think I've pulled it off well. Not as good as some of the other schemes I have seen, but I like it and it fits in well with the army: cohesion is a winner.

The subject of Drakons brings me neatly onto the subject of my army list. I'm not a competitive gamer, and I never have been, but this tournament lark has prompted much beard-stroking (and growing of beards for stroking) as I ponder whether I should be doing something different. I have stuck to my original list so far, and played a few games with it, but without cavalry or flying beasties, I was lacking some of the speed I desired. Now that I have these models, I will be using them in my games to full effect. One change that I am considering is breaking the Drakons down form one unit into three single models; one Lord and two regulars. I'm worried in both cases about survivability. Fortunately, Jonathan Peace's own war gaming club (*War and Peace in Long Eaton nr. Nottingham:- shameless plug*) is coming up and I intend to continue my testing, but with the new scaled recruits. I can try both builds, see how they perform, and decide afterwards.

The other change to my list is less of a reliance on magic items. I used to plug a good two hundred points into these trinkets, but I've decided to lessen that so that I can fit in the separate Drakons, or another unit in their stead. There are one or two key ones I have kept, including an interesting combination stumbled upon by fellow Pathfinder Chris Nicholls. This will make me better at timed games, as I won't have to worry about the umpteen effects that are knocking around my list, and so quicker turns for me!

I do have to say that Mantic keeps surprising me with this one. The plastic elves are wonderfully dynamic, without being too fiddly, and can look stunning with a little care

in painting. The Drakons are also very cool, but the runaway star of the show are the Mantic plastic cases, which are still transporting my entire army safely, including the Drakons. The scouts weren't in them and so, suffered – lesson learned.

Neil Dixon (Dwarfs)

When presented with the challenge, I admit I found it daunting. I tried to think of the number of armies in recent memory I had stuck to and finished painting over a sustained period. The answer: Zero! Clash of Kings was an opportunity to start afresh, so I set myself these goals:

- Make an army that I am proud of and like admiring. This would make me want to paint even more and play as often as possible.
- Ensure I select an easy colour scheme. Too many times in the past, I have set my painting standard too high. At a later date it seems like too much effort to add new units. I either do not want to paint anymore models for the army or the units become mismatched with different painting standards!
- I wanted to ensure I finished the models completely. I constantly get distracted by new models to paint and never get round to finishing all the little details like banners and shields!

So, what is my progress on these aims, and how have I accomplished them?

The look and theme

I wanted my army to pass the 'two foot' test. That is, to look good on the table when viewed from two foot or more away. I thought style was very important, so I researched how my army could be customised so the models were unique. I added sculpted resin shields which has given my Dwarfs a unique and common theme. They also remove the need to paint free hand patterns, saving a lot of time!

I also wanted models to tell a story, so I added accessories like barrels and Dwarven ruins to the bases. I positioned models in each of my Ironwatch troops according to whether they were under attack, getting ready to fire or standing down. Spending a small amount of time thinking about the poses of the models really makes a huge difference to how your miniatures look in the 'two foot test'.

Selecting models I like also helped. I have found Berserkers to be poor value in points compared to other regiments in the army list, but I loved the models so much that I had to paint them! Similarly, I wanted to paint a variety of war machines so Organ Guns were present in my original list. Sadly, my recent battles have rendered these redundant as Cannons are far more effective. But not to worry, I do not mind losing if I have a soft spot for my models!

Colour scheme

Hopefully I have accomplished my goal of passing the 'two foot test', but my painting certainly does not stand up to close scrutiny. I used washes for shading with absolutely no highlighting! I selected a limited colour palette of black, silver, white and brown. When viewed from afar, I wanted my models to look like a unified army. My simple colour scheme means I can easily paint a regiment a month, setting a standard that is achievable rather than idealistic!

Finishing

Setting myself a goal of posting on the blog at least once a month has certainly motivated me to finish banners, shields and bases and accomplish my deadlines! The feedback I have received so far has been really helpful. I acted on comments to drill out the barrels of my Cannons and to use different colour washes on beards, which has certainly improved the look of my army. Even after Clash of Kings is over, I have enjoyed blogging enough to continue. Reporting on progress for Clash of Kings 2014 as my next challenge perhaps?

Matt Gilbert (Sylvan Fey… not Elves)

Oh who am I kidding? Yes I got landed with Elves. Pointy eared faeries.

Squaring up to adversity I embraced the Green Lady (I apologised for the lack of decorum later) and decided to do the wood elf army I secretly always wanted to do many years ago (don't tell anyone). I do have a GW High-elf army so didn't want to do more of the same theme for this army. In fact, having an elf army already was one of the reasons I didn't want another one. So I needed to make the army very different and I chose two ways to do that: firstly in appearance and secondly in the way the army played.

To help me understand both aspects, I decided I was going to immerse myself in the project: by which I mean creating literature to scope, define, develop and describe the Elves. Starting with aligning my background with the new fluff in the KoW hardback book (which we all had early sight of) I have since written two stories and changed all the names in the Elf army list to be far more appropriate to my aesthetic. I still have one more story to write, more background and also explanations as to why I chose the unit names. I intend to publish the whole set as a single volume at the end of the project.

My initial army list was revised after a test game against Stew. I've yet to try the revised list but I needed to plan the army and start work so I've stuck with it and have fingers crossed it will not be found wanting. However – I'm having a whole ton of fun on all the other facets of the army with the building, painting and writing that I'm not really fussed at this stage. Playtesting (and lamenting army selection no doubt) will come after Christmas which is my target for completing all my painting.

I've already got all my monthly Mantic purchases and might well have come in cheaper than anyone else. I do have a fair number of non-Mantic models in my army but I'm budget-neutral on all these as I sold some old stuff off on eBay to fund them. I think this can be a good strategy if you are working to a tight budget.

I believe my initial paint scheme has held up across all the various units and I'm happy that the colour palette has so far worked across all the units painted to date; tying them all together and selling the arboreal theme. So far so good then. We'll see if I can successfully hit that Christmas painting deadline.▪

The Pathfinder blogs can be found here:

Pete:http://forum.manticblog.com/blog.php?10-Pathfinder-Pete-McF

David:http://forum.manticblog.com/blog.php?11-sukura636

Andy:http://forum.manticblog.com/blog.php?65-Faschist-Hippy

Neil:http://forum.manticblog.com/blog.php?841-landowner

Matt:http://forum.manticblog.com/blog.php?7-mattjgilbert

By "Dusty"

The Owl and the Blade

By John Hoyland

Part 3

Aftermath

I

"What is the butcher's bill?" The leather of Deor's glove creaked as he clenched and unclenched his fist, testing the stitches holding closed the gash on the back of his forearm. He winced slightly at the itch the movement provoked.

"Why are you wearing your gloves?" Breydd asked.

"I go to meet envoys from Gratticus King," replied Deor. "And I go arrayed for war. Now, the butcher's bill?"

"Thirty-seven dead," said Breydd. "A little more than a hundred wounded, of whom forty or so will not fight again and something like a dozen will probably die of their wounds. All in all, a tale of success, I would say."

Deor's eyes were downcast. "I doubt the spirits of those who died unHolded would consider it a success."

Breydd grunted. "Nevertheless, to defeat an orc horde three time greater than our numbers and lose so few? Any chronicler would record that as a great victory."

"I do not dispute it was a victory, perhaps even a great one," sighed Deor. "But victory and success are not always the same thing."

Breydd said nothing. He cared little for the philosopher's bent that seemed to come over the Owl from time to time. He understood that melancholy often followed battle, but there was more of the introspective about Deor than Breydd could fathom. Breydd saw the world with the simplicity of the warrior – and the berserk at that. It was well, he knew, that he was not a lord.

"Do you need me for anything?" he asked.

Deor lifted his gaze to meet Breydd's. "No," he said. "Not immediately. But when Gratticus King's envoys come, then I will summon you. Areg also."

Breydd bowed and turned to go.

“Oh, and Breydd –”

The berserker turned back to his lord.

The edge of a smile played around Deor’s features. “– When I summon you, bring your angriest glower with you. I want Gratticus King to know that the People of the Owl are not to be trifled with.”

Breydd grinned. It was like watching a predator bare its teeth.

II

Deadr wept. She wept for her husband, whose corpse was stiff, grey and cold already and she wept for her cousin, who had lost a son to the orc. She wept because neither she nor her cousin could bury their beloved kin in the ancestral chambers beneath their mountain Hold. She wept because neither she nor her cousin would stand at the threshold of the Chamber of Remembrance and listen to the deeds of their kin read aloud as each new year was hallowed. Because the People of the Owl had neither chamber in which to inter their dead nor Chamber of Remembrance in which to recall the deeds of their dead.

Because the People of the Owl were unHolded.

Because their Lord, Deor Ule, was a fool.

It was a treasonous thought, that one. A thought that, given voice, would see her before the Council of Elders. A treasonous thought for which she could be branded, flogged or even executed.

I want Gratticus King to know that the People of the Owl are not to be trifled with

But not while it remained a thought. While it was but a thought she was free to hold it, to nurse it, to let it fester.

But Deadr wanted to shout it at the stars.

She became aware of a presence behind her and turned enough to catch a glimpse of who it was who intruded on her grief.

By Michael DeFranco

It was the fat merchant, Areg. One of Deor Ule's counsellors and therefore as fool a dwarf as the Owl himself.

"Don't say anything," she warned. "I want no platitudes. No talk of victory." She turned back to her husband's corpse. "There is no victory here."

"Indeed not," agreed Areg, which caused Deadr to frown. "Do not presume," Areg continued, "That all the Owl's counsellors advised attacking the orc. Battle should not be the only weapon in a Clan Lord's armoury."

She turned back to her husband's corpse. "There is no victory here."

By "puggimer"

Deadr's frown deepened. Areg's words – or at least the speaking so freely of them to one who did not sit on the Owl's council – bordered on treason.

Was it a trick? Was her loyalty to the Clan being tested?

"Speak your thoughts freely," said Areg. His voice was barely above a whisper.

"My thoughts are my own," Deadr told him.

"Very well," said Areg. "But know that you can safely – confidentially – air them to me, should you feel the need. Whatever your thoughts may be."

Deadr wanted to speak. To give voice to her anger. To her treason.

She held her tongue.

"So be it," said Areg after a time. "I will leave you with your grief." Deadr heard the shuffle of clothes as the merchant turned to go.

"It *is* grief," she was surprised to hear her own voice, blurting out of the quiet. She was surprised too to find herself turning to Areg. "Grief holds me now. But my thoughts are not only of grief.

"They are also grievous. Treasonous. But I would rather keep them as my own, for the time being."

Areg's face was flat, emotionless. "Of course," he said. "Give it time. Two, three days. If your thoughts are still grievous – *treasonous*, even – and you find that you

wish to give them voice… well… my offer of confidentiality will still stand."

Deadr turned briefly back to her husband's corpse, on the verge of asking his advice.

When she turned back to Areg, the merchant was walking away.

Gratticus King
I

"Why should Gratticus King treat with his enemies?"

Gratticus King's herald stood tall, all perfectly pressed red and yellow tabard and nose thrust high in the air; the better to look down at the dwarf Clan Lord. Gratticus King himself stood back from the meet, a smile of pure condescension dressing his features. Before him stood his household guard, heavy pole-arms held at an angle that spoke of threat without being levelled at the dwarfs.

By "imm0rtal reaper"

The only aim of this parley is to settle upon the speed with which you will surrender arms and march from his kingdom

The air those men gave off said that any slight move toward their liege lord would result in blood being spilled.

It wasn't an auspicious start to a parley.

"His enemies are dead by our hand," replied Deor, eyes looking past the herald and fixing on Gratticus King.

"You are abroad in his lands, under arms, and without his consent. If you can show him any treaty that says otherwise then Gratticus King might consider sitting at table with you. If not, then you are his enemy and the only aim of this parley is to settle upon the speed with which you will surrender arms and march from his kingdom."

By Deor's side, Breydd spluttered at the herald's words, but an utterance from his Lord bade him hold his tongue.

"I have come here to parley," said the Owl. "And I do so from a position of strength." He continued to stare at Gratticus King. "Your armies in the field are crushed by the orc

By "Dusty"

and what strength you have left resides in your capital. I do not believe that strength is enough to stand before my host."

The herald spluttered at that. "How dare –"

"– Hold your tongue, herald!" snapped Deor. He breathed a sigh. "I did not come here to offer ultimatums, but aid," he said at length. "Gratticus King; your lands are safe once more from the orc. I sent word to you that all I required in return was safe passage across your lands. My messenger did not return to me. Do you know of his whereabouts? His name is Eolos."

Gratticus King's eyes flinched, just a fraction.

"Gratticus King does not know of whom you speak," said the herald.

"Oh, but he does," replied Deor, eyes not letting go of Gratticus King. "Did you harm him, Gratticus King?"

Confusion worried at the herald's face and he turned to his king. "Great King?" he asked.

Gratticus King snapped to life. "Do not speak to me, worm!" he shrieked, his voice high and trilling. "Do not speak!"

"Where is my messenger!?" roared Deor suddenly, and now he advanced on Gratticus King. Breydd moved with him, an axe in each hand and a feral grin splitting his beard. Gratticus King's guard levelled their pole-arms, but not one of them looked keen to blood their blades, not faced with a glowering dwarf Lord unwinding his anger and a moon-mad berserk who grinned at the prospect of blood being let, be it his enemies' or his own.

"Do not speak to me, worm!" he shrieked, his voice high and trilling. "Do not speak!"

"My lords please!" cried Areg, throwing himself into the middle of the boil of it. "This is a parley! A talking, not a fighting! Let the blood already spilled on this ground be all the blood it has to see."

Deor stopped still and let out a long breath. The anger around him seemed to diminish. Breydd halted too, but the pent up, fit-to-burst aggression of him did not dissipate.

"My counsellor is correct," said Deor. "I did not come here to trade blows, merely to ensure safe passage through the lands of Gratticus King for my people. I had thought that a prince of men would know to offer thanks for the aid he has been given, but I see I was misguided in my thoughts. I should not be surprised by this; I have had… unfortunate… dealings with the Children of Man in the past.

He threw things; chalices, plates, knives. One of his household guard nearly lost an eye

"Therefore, I will simply offer you the blessings of the day and, permission or otherwise, travel on my way, my people around me. If Gratticus King wishes to offer battle then he is, of course, more than welcome to meet me in the field.

"He can expect the same quarter as was offered to the orc."

II

"You certainly know how to endear yourself to the Children of Man, don't you?" Breydd spoke with a wolf-smile on his lips. It was the smile of a wolf-lord congratulating a fellow pack-leader for a kill.

Doer smiled back, though without humour. He inclined his head to Areg. "Thank you, Areg, for stepping in when you did. A swift, wise – yes, and brave – action."

Areg coloured at the praise. "Do not dismiss Gratticus King," he warned. "He is no martial in the field, but he is, I think, spiteful and will not take lightly the slighting you offered him."

"He doesn't have the might to meet us in battle," sneered Breydd. "His armies are shattered."

"No," said Areg, "But there are other ways to topple a ruler besides meeting him in battle."

III

Gratticus King railed and spat. He hissed and shrieked. He called down curses on the heads of all dwarf kind. He threw things; chalices, plates, knives. One of his household guard nearly lost an eye.

But all his rage was impotent. The cursed dwarf lord was right. Gratticus King had

By Pete Kijek

nothing like the strength of arms to meet him on the field. It seemed he had no choice but to let the rabble of dwarfs wander free across his lands.

"No," he hissed to himself. "No! I am still king in this land. I will not suffer this insult! Herald!" The man crept from the shadows, shoulders slumped, eyes defeated. "You will carry word to the White Ones. I have a dwarf I wish dead."

The herald could not bring himself to meet his mater's eye. "I fear there may not be sufficient in the coffers –"

"– Then you will take them whatever payment they wish! We have women. Children. Fresh meat for their depravities. I care not! The dwarf will die.

By Boris Samec

"And find the body of the messenger of whom he spoke. Eolos. Send it back to the dwarf. If it's too heavy for a man to carry, cut it into manageable parts."

The herald nodded, bowed and fled his master's presence. He felt a flutter of pity for this Deor the Owl as he fled.

Because Gratticus King sought the services of the White Ones.

And no-one survived when the White Ones blade-danced.▪

Dwarf Command Tent

By Stuart Smith

Picture 1: Basic tent model.

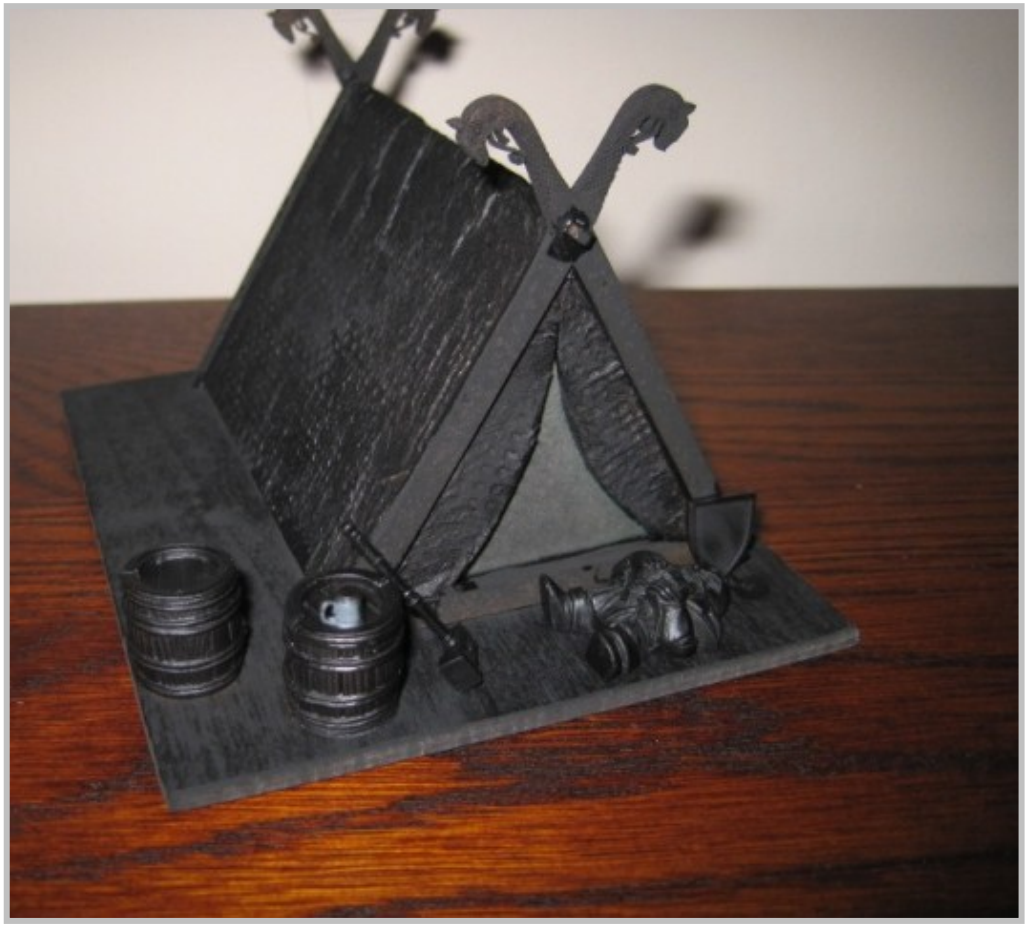
Whenever I start a new army I always like to plan and make at least one piece of scenery to help add 'period flavour' to the look of my force. Having decided to create a Kings of War Dwarf Army I started to wonder what sort of scenery would look good for the Dwarves. Having seen the 'Warbases' movement trays on the Mantic Forum I had already decided to base my Dwarves on some of those. Of course I had to have a look at what else 'Warbases' had to offer and came across their 'Viking Tent' model.

The dragon head designs on the tent posts soon made very Dwarf like impressions on my imagination and a tent was soon ordered along with a batch of movement trays.

Thankfully 'Warbases' turnaround of orders was quick so the Viking tent was soon in my possession. Just like much of the furniture in our house, it comes as a flat pack model but this one easily slots together as in picture 1.

Picture 2: Tent assembled with paper towel texture.

The detail on the model is reasonably deeply etched but I felt it lacked a bit of texture. Also the front flaps of the tent are modelled in an open position. I decided to apply a layer of kitchen paper towel to the main tent body areas to try and represent canvas or leather. I also cut a piece of card to shape and glued it



Picture 3: Tent assembled and undercoated

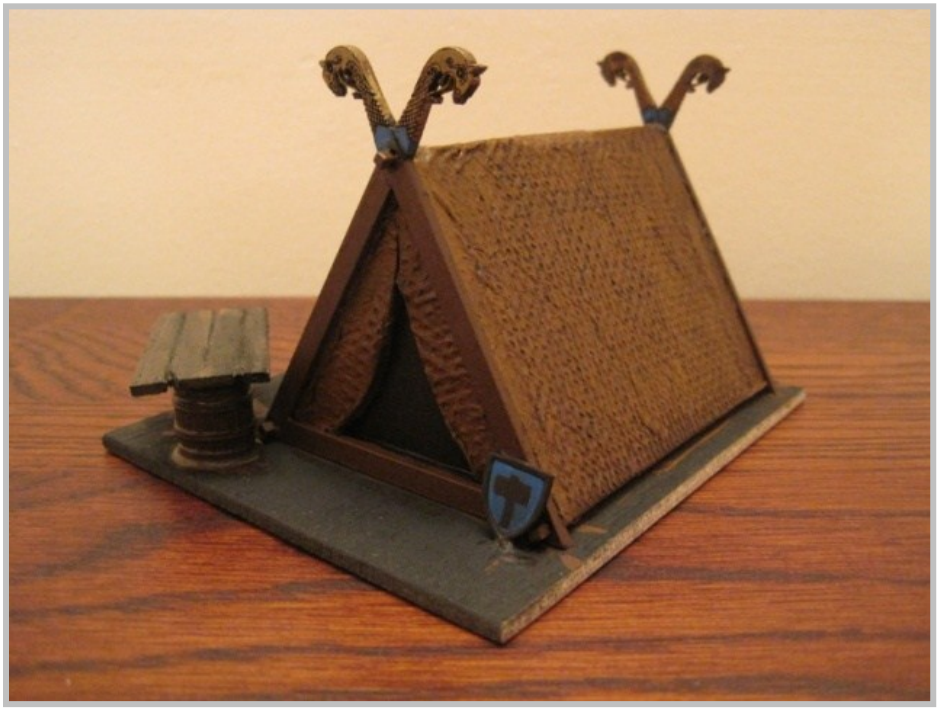
behind the front tent flaps as in picture 2. Once the paper towel was glued in place with watered down PVA glue I glued the whole model together.

The drunken dwarf lying by the side of the tent gives you an idea of the size of the model, quite imposing I think and most suitable for my Dwarf King to plan his victories from.

I cut a base from 3mm plywood and glued the model into position. Next I added a few bits and pieces from my wargames bits box, creating a table from two beer barrels and an old piece of balsa wood. I used a sharp pencil to etch some 'planking' detail onto the table top and a dwarf shield was propped against the tent entrance. Then I undercoated the whole thing with black spray paint.

Initially I had thought I was going to paint the tent an off-white colour to represent old canvas but changed my mind just as I was starting to paint and opted to try and make it look like a leather tent similar to the ones the Romans used.

When painting; I always put down a neat base coat first on all the main areas and then apply quite a



Picture 4: Base colours and dark brown wash applied.

heavy wash of burnt umber acrylic paint (a dark brown wash).

Once everything was dry I was able to paint the main areas applying drybrushing to the main tent area and detail where needed, (I painted the dwarf shield to match those of my Ironclads for example). Whilst doing this I was trying to work out whether or not to put any actual figures on the base. I decided to go for one heavy hammer armed dwarf guard supping his ale. I painted a map to add to the table and a glued a few rocks to the base for scenic effect and the model was finished. I am quite pleased with how it turned out and feel that it makes my Dwarf Army quite unique.

The great thing about a small piece of scenery like this is it really does add atmosphere to your gaming table. It can be used as a purely decorative piece of scenery or it can actually become an objective in a game, which could be very interesting especially if both sides had a similar Command HQ objective.

I also have a 'Warbases' Viking hut which will eventually become a Dwarf Drinking Hut and I am currently partway through creating a wagon mounted Army Standard for my Dwarves. However what I really need to do is get more Dwarf units painted first! ▪

Picture 5: The finished Dwarf Command Tent.

Whither Sailed Those Ships?

by Michael Grey

Commodities oil the wheels of the Co-Prosperity Sphere's multitudinous cogs. They are bought, sold, traded. Held in escrow, trust and, often, ransom.

And, sometimes, they are never let go of. Such a thing in the Sphere, where commerce is an inbred as breathing, is uncommon in the extreme and for it there must be a very, *very*, good reason.

It may be for something which is unique. The galaxy is after all vast, and its treasures uncatalogued. Or it could be something as intangible as information.

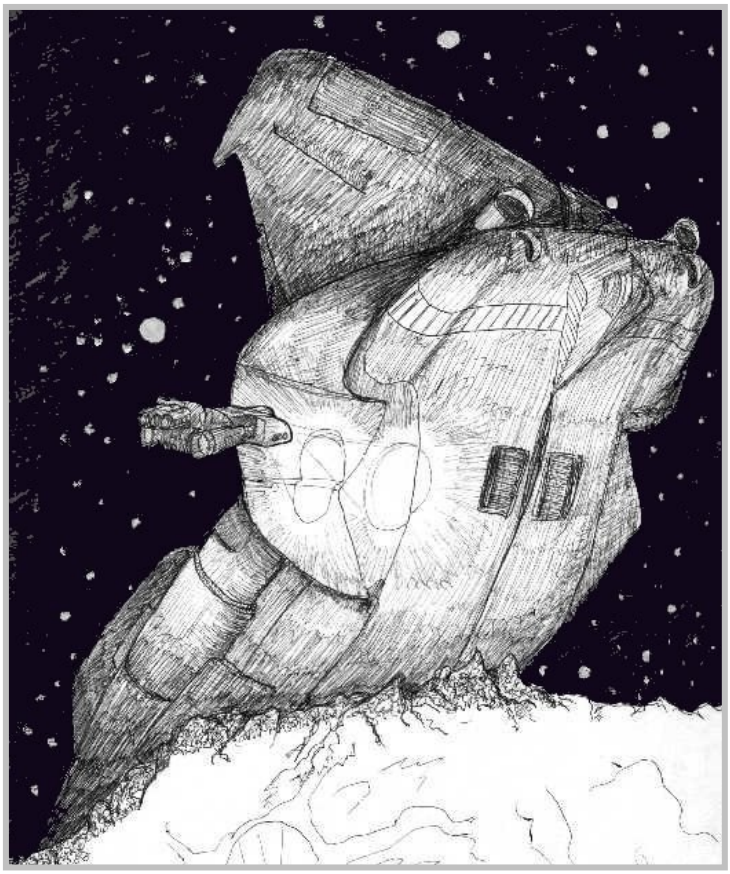
It should be remembered that the Co-Prosperity Sphere is really quite immense. Hundreds of Corporations, each fed by thousands of subsidiaries which in turn oversee the daily running of planets and star systems still not entirely counted. A bureaucracy as monolithic as Corporation Central will never truly hold onto all the secrets it tries to keep.

Among the rumours leaking core-wards from the edges of the expanding Sphere space there is one which is insistent in its telling. What makes this story stand out from the rest is unusual enough to remark upon by itself.

What is essentially the same series of events are told by the dust miners in the Aquila Rift, to overstressed salarymen in the core systems. If anyone were to sit near them as they relay the story in any of a multitude of bars, they would hear of an incursion into a planet's space.

The planet in each story is always home to a population of humans, and is universally new to the Sphere. The infrastructure and governance which a Corporation brings to a new world is already in place. But the, what some may uncharitably say, innocence is still present, and yet to be crushed by the weight of commerce and consumerism inclusion in the Sphere inevitably brings.

That a Sphere world, with its military grade security, field projectors and sub space scanners could have its



By Jonathan Hicks

By "Skolo"

atmosphere invaded would be worrying enough. But that the incursions come from *within* the planet's own atmosphere raises its own frightening questions.

What follows is of even more concern for a body whose rule is virtually notional across the gulfs of interstellar space.

The contact, as the tales go, by now fully lit by the same systems which failed to pick it up only minutes before, is tracked across the planet's surface. Always it appears travelling south from the northern pole on the planet's dark side, and makes for the nearest population centre.

Protocols for unexpected inner-atmosphere contacts are laid down by Corporation Central and as inflexible as the old men who wrote them. They state that all contacts with a planet's zone should be tracked and all details recorded, but not intercepted until an assessment to its attributes is made. After all, there is little point in destroying possibly new exploitable technology, and the loss of a few cities is deemed worth the risk for some unexpected profit.

The contact reaches the city in a time which should be impossible for an atmospheric vessel. Its telemetry dictates the air around it should burn with superheated friction, and the ground below and behind flattened by a shockwave more associated with space-faring warships. But to all intents and purposes, according to the readings, for all the affect it has on its surroundings it may as well not be there.

Dependant on the topography, the planetary Governor will be notified or awakened as the target leaves the first population centre and moves towards the next by proximity. It would be noted at this point by those monitoring the occurrence, that the returning data from the contact does not accord to any known vessel type. It's smaller than most personal transports, and not made of any alloy which would be able to absorb the stresses it is exerting upon itself without shattering. In fact, the readings suggest a combination of organic and vegetable matter, with only a small a percentage of its mass given over to any artificial compound.

Questions are then asked to the contact's intent. It spends only minutes

By Jonathan Hicks

in a city before departing for another, following the planet's dark side as it spins its night cycle. No reports come in from the cities it visits of untoward occurrences. No odd explosions, no breaches of municipal buildings. It is as if it is there for completely un-malign purposes. But that it is doing something cannot be denied. The signal flits around the urban area with such alacrity that the traces it leaves on the tracking computer rapidly paint the screens red, and then it is gone, zipping off to the next centre with a force of acceleration which no interceptor can match.

The world's governors are left to sit helpless as the contact moves from one city to the next with impunity, intentions unknown. They watch with greedy eyes, all lusting after a technology which could move so quickly that all land battles would be a foregone conclusion to Sphere victory, and realising with growing frustration that it will remain intractably outside their reach.

It is only when this reality is accepted that the governor will give the order, the contact re-classified as a target, and the orbit-based strategic deterrents triggered. Missiles, no larger than a table knife, are aimed, locked and released at the target. A basic Corporation planet's only armament capable of attaining the speed of the contact, and detonating with a sub-nuclear warhead designed to protect the infrastructural investment on the surface below.

For the planets still without even the most basic of defences, however, the contact will continue its journey, visiting each town and city in turn, following the sweep of the planet's dark side, and returning towards the northern pole before a single day/night cycle has been completed. Come the morning no sign will be found of the contact, and no reason would discerned for its visitation.

The story, retold from a billion different mouths from a thousand different worlds, is in constant circulation, despite the best efforts of the Council Protection Agency, gaining momentum towards the end of every one Terran year, and varies only in the teller's own personal dialect and how the tale leaked to the general population.

The origin of the contact's origin varies almost as much as there are people to speculate. Yet there are some threads which are insistent in their resurgence.

The most persistent is that humanity is joined loosely by a shared conscious, born and grown through our speciesal adolescence, when experiences were collectively shared and filtered into purity. That our early perceptions of the world passed into group awareness in the form of folklore and stories, handed down from one generation to the next, until a critical mass of humanity realised an anthropomorphic resonance. A literal bringing to life an echo of Earth's lost children.

In the modern galaxy's sterile outlook of science and logic, such views are not even deemed laughable. What is undeniable however, are the statistics. That as time rolls on, as what ties the people hold to an Earth they have never known withers, so do the incursions. Until all that is left are rumours thrown out as diaspora, questions, and the cryogenically stored evidence of their happening. In vats across ten thousand worlds, in the heart of mega structures deep within catacombs of sheet steel rooms where the light will never shine again, are the remains of ragged fur scraps, hoof, gaily painted wood and singed patches of red cloth.▪

For more stories like this, visit Michael's blog at www.michaelgrey.com.au

By "Skolo"

Warpath: Spaceship Battles

By Pete Jones

Welcome to the beta test edition of Warpath: Spaceship Battles, an unofficial supplementary game to Mantic Games' sci-fi table top miniatures game.

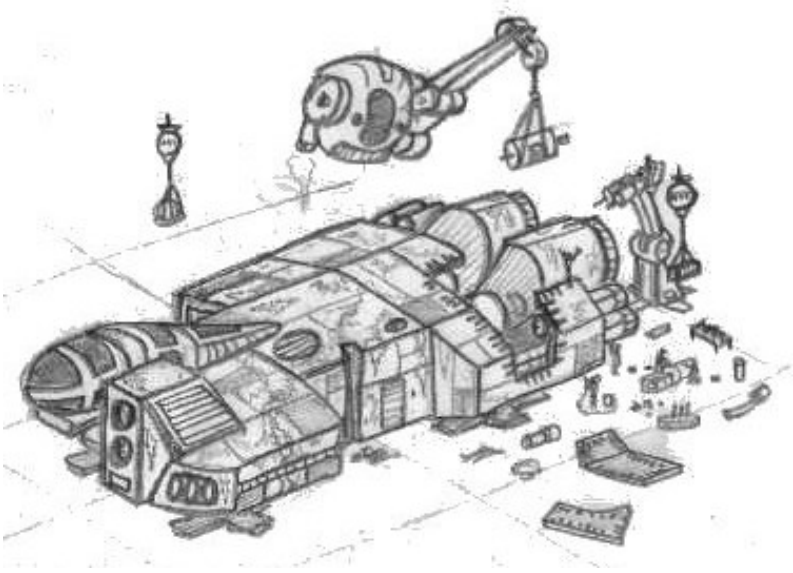
As the name suggests, this game allows players to fight battles between fleets of starships from the Warpath universe. It uses many elements that Warpath players will find familiar, but also has some unique elements.

The rules presented here are a first draft (or 'beta') version, and have not been fully play tested yet. If you like what you see, please give it a go and send feedback, as this will help develop the rules. The more feedback the better the finished product will be, so don't be shy!

You can leave feedback on my website: www.strictlycomewargaming.com

Alternatively you can email me directly at Pete.jones100@hotmail.co.uk (please put 'WPSB' as the subject of the email).

Enjoy!



By Jonathan Hicks

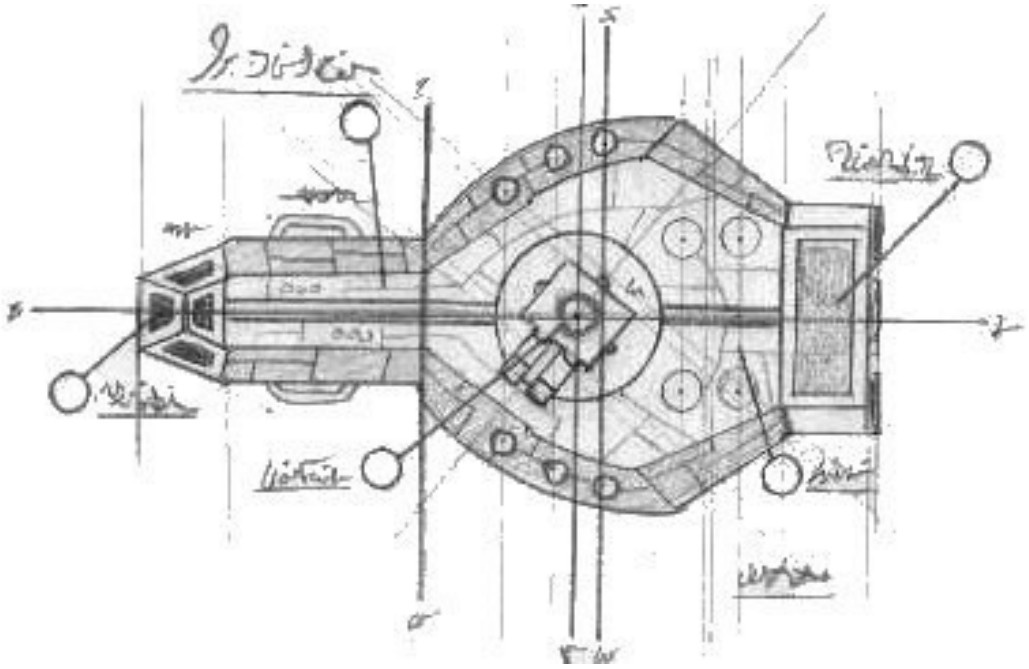
Basic Principles

I've designed these rules to work with model spaceships on 'flight stands' (as this is what most space wargames use). All distances, regardless of the size of the ship, are measured from the stem of the flight stand as this represents the ships actual position. If you are using proxies (such as bits of card) you will need to mark a center point from which to measure.

The game uses six-sided dice (D6s) only. However, I would recommend having a few 10 or 20 sided dice to keep track of how much damage a ship has accumulated. Alternatively you could record this on a notepad.

Exactly like vehicles in Warpath, spaceships have four 'facings', front, left, right and rear. It may help to make a template from clear plasticard to help you determine facings.

You may measure distances at any time during the game.



By Jonathan Hicks

Also included in the stats are a ships cost in points (used for putting a fleet together) and which weapons is carries. The letters in square brackets after the weapon name indicate which facings that weapon can fire from (Front, Left or Right)

What you will need

To play Warpath: Spaceship Battles you will need something to represent your ships, a flat, playing surface (for now we will assume battles take place in deep space with no obstructions), a handful of D6s and some markers (marked 'done', 'full speed ahead', 'holding position' and 'disabled'). Having an opponent often helps too!

Stats

Each ship has its own stat line. Stats are as follows

Speed: how far the ship move, in inches

Hit: How easily the gunners can hit their targets

Defense: How easy the ship is to damage

Hull Points: The number of times a ship can be damaged before it is destroyed

Hull Integrity: The ships ability to stand up to sustained fire. Multiple hits increase the chance of a critical hit, which could temporarily disable a ship or cause it to blow up!

For example:

Vulture Class Light Cruiser – 60 points

Name	Speed	Hit	Def	Hull Points	Hull Integrity
Light Cruiser	10	4+	4+	6	9/11

Weapons: Laser Cannon [F/L/R], Small Torpedo Launcher [F], 1 PDT

The Turn

Like Warpath, this game uses an alternate activation turn sequence. A turn starts with both players rolling a D6. The winner gains 'the initiative' and must activate a ship. He/She moves the ship, fires on the enemy and tests the enemy's hull integrity (if applicable) before moving on.

The first activation is automatic, and after it has been completed the player may elect to pass the initiative to his/her opponent. However, a player may wish to activate a second and a third ship when they have the

initiative, but this is a gamble. To activate a second ship a roll of 3+ on a D6 is required, and to activate a third a 5+ is required. If an activation roll is failed, the ship *drifts (*see 'moving') and initiative immediately passed to the opponent.

Once one player has activated all their ships their opponent must activate all of their remaining ships. 'Remaining ships' always require a 3+ to activate regardless of how many are left.

Moving

Once a ship has been activated it needs a movement order. Choose one of the following and move the ship accordingly:

Cruise: The ship moves more than half and no more than its full speed. It may perform one turn of up to 90 degrees at any point during this move.

All Stop: The ship remains stationary. Place a 'holding position' marker next to the ship. This marker stays in play until the next time the ship is activated. A ship cannot perform All Stop if it moved 'full speed ahead' in it's last activation.

Full Speed Ahead!: The ship moves straight forward up to double it's speed. It may not move less than its normal speed value. Place a 'full speed ahead' marker next to the ship, this remains in play until the ship is activated again. A ship may not perform this if it was 'holding position' in it's last activation. A ship moving Full Speed Ahead may not shoot.

Change Heading: The ship moves at half its speed value. It may perform a single turn of up to 360 degrees at any point during its move.

Drifting: Should a ship fail it's activation (or be disabled by a hull integrity test) it will 'drift', it's momentum carrying it forward as the captain attempts to re-establish communication. If an activation is failed, move the ship forward at least half its speed value and no more than its full speed value. There are two exceptions to this:

*If the ship was holding position, it continues to do so and retains the marker

*If the ship was moving Full Speed Ahead it will drift at exactly its speed value

Shooting

A ship may fire any weapons its has at any eligible targets. Each weapon may only fire once per activation. A ship may split fire between two different targets if possible, although this will incur a penalty. If the player elects to do this, declare which weapons are being targeted at which enemy

By Jonathan Hicks

ships.

A ships stats will tell you which arcs each weapon is able to fire from. For example, 'Laser Cannon [F]' means this weapon can only fire at targets in the ships front arc.

Weapons have different stats, describing their range, firepower and any special rules they have.

Below are two examples of Corporation weapon systems:

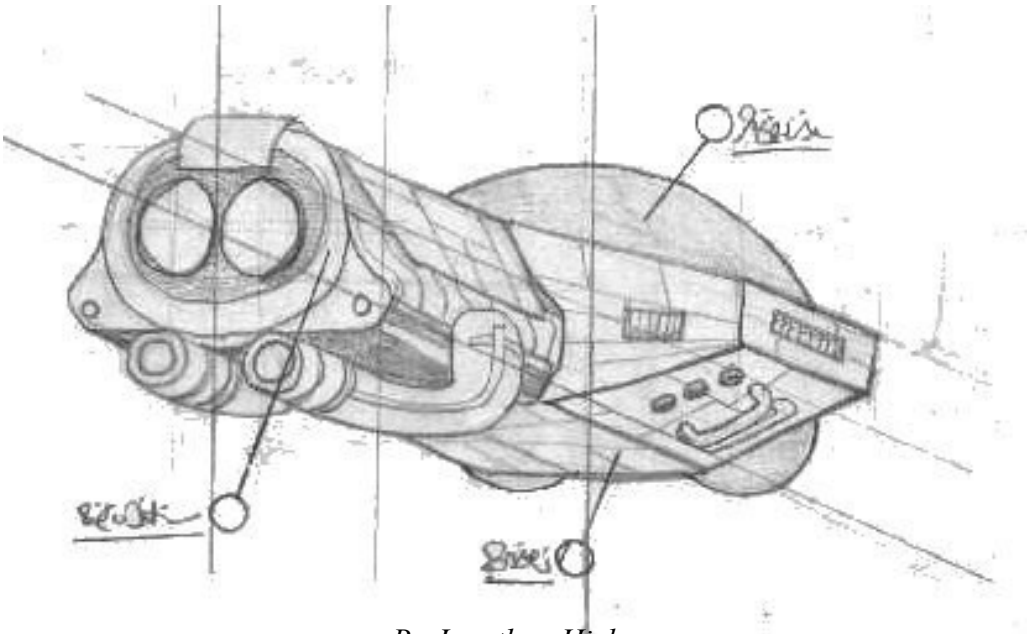
Name	Range	Fire	Special
Laser Cannon	24”	5	-
Torpedo Launcher	18”	6	Piercing (1)

To fire a weapon, pick up the number of dice indicated by the 'fire' stat and roll to hit. Use the ships 'hit' characteristic to determine how many hits were scored, with the following modifiers:

Target is more than half the weapon's range away: **-1**
Target is moving at Full Speed Ahead: **-1**
Target is a squadron: **-1**
Target is Holding Position: **+1**
Firing ship is Holding Position: **+1**
Firing ship is shooting at more than one target in an activation: **-1**
Firing ship performed Change Heading: **-1**

After the number of hits has been determined roll all the hits again and compare them to the targets 'defense' value. Any that roll equal to or higher than this value score a point of damage. For each point of damage the targets number of Hull Points is reduced by one. When this is reduced to zero the ship is removed from play.

Special Rule: "Target Their Engines!"
Ship drive sections are often their most vulnerable parts. If you are firing into a ships 'aft' arc, add +1 to any damage rolls.

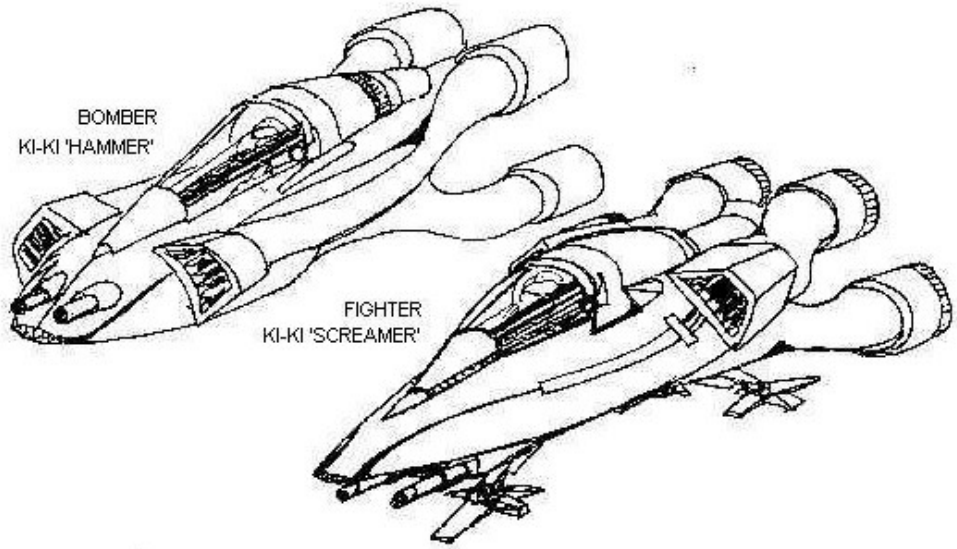


By Jonathan Hicks

Hull Integrity

If, at the end of an activation a ship has had its number of Hull Points reduced by 50% you can test it's Hull Integrity. For those who already play Warpath or Kings of War, this is very similar to testing Nerve.

To test integrity, roll 2D6 and compare the result to the targets Hull Integrity score.



By Jonathan Hicks

If the result is equal to or greater than the first value, but less than the second the target is 'disabled'. This means the target temporarily out of action as the crew fight to repair systems and control damage. In it's next activation the ship can only *drift* (see movement rules). The marker is discarded after it's next activation has been completed, regardless of whether the activation was successful or not.

If the result is equal to or greater than the second value the ship detonates in spectacular fashion! Remove it from play.

Squadrons

Squadrons is a catch-all term for space ships that are too small to be of much effect on their own, and so fight in formations and co-ordinate their attacks. Squadrons might consist of anything from one-man fighters up to heavy torpedo boats with a crew of 10 to 15.

Squadrons are similar to regular ships (albeit quite a bit weaker) but have a number of special rules to govern how they work in game terms.

Squadron Leader - Squadron consist of more than one ship (defined in the units roster entry), but to make things nice and simple all measurements for movement and shooting are taken from (and to) a single ship designated and the 'squadron leader'. Mark this model out with a token, a symbol on its base or a different color scheme. Other ships in the squadron are placed within 1" of the squadron leader.

Movement

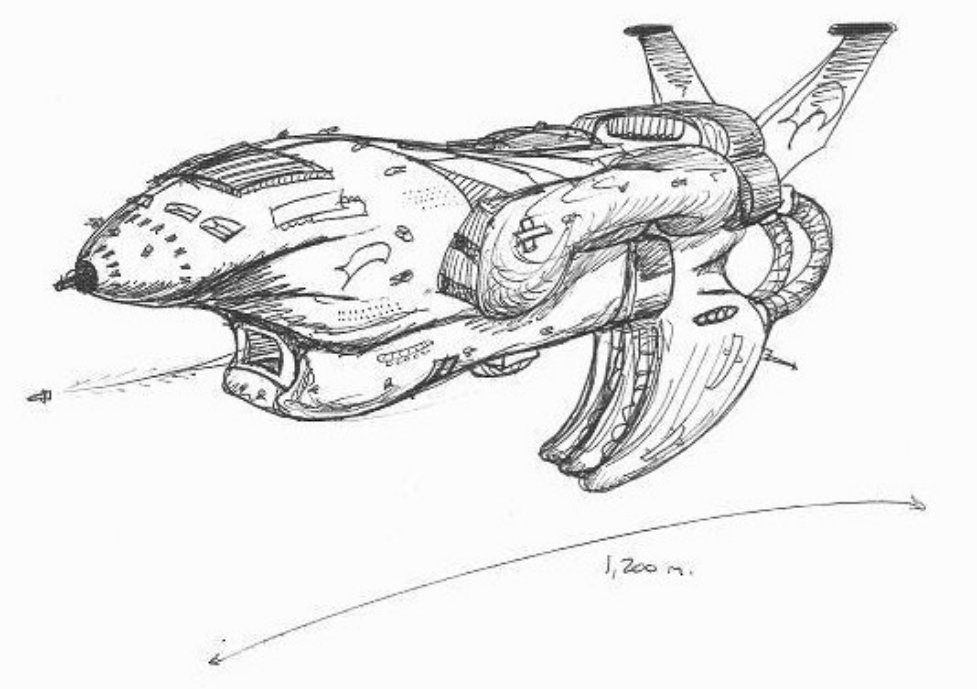
Select a movement order for the squadron as you would any other ship, then move the squadron leader according to that order. Then arrange the remaining ships around the leader.

Agile - all squadrons are agile (see Special Rules).

Squadron Shooting

Squadron ships have short ranged weapons and advanced targeting computers. They never suffer a negative modifier for the target being over half range.

All ships in a squadron are identically armed, usually have just a single weapon and fire as one. To determine how many dice to roll, simply multiply the number of ships in the squadron by the 'fire' value of their weapon they have. For example; a squadron of Corporation fighters has 4 ships remaining



By Jonathan Hicks

and is armed with burst lasers (fire 2), it would therefore roll 8 dice providing its squadron leader is in range. All distances are measured from the squadron leader.

Shooting At Squadrons

Squadrons targeted as a whole rather than individual ships. They provide small targets, so anyone trying to shoot at a squadron suffers and additional -1 to hit. To shoot at a squadron, you must be within range of its leader, as all measurements are taken from this reference point.

As squadrons tend to have only one Hull Point, they do not have a Hull Integrity value. A successful roll to damage will reduce the size of the squadron by one. Remove models and reduce the total firepower of the squadron accordingly. Always remove the squadron leader last.

Point Defense Turrets

Point Defense Turrets. or PDTs are short range defensive weapons specifically designed to take out small ships.

A ship may fire it's PDTs in the shooting phase at any eligible targets.

Firing PDT's are treated as separate from a ships normal weapons so the ship is still free to fire it's other weapons at other targets without incurring a to-hit penalty. A PDT can fire at any target within range, regardless of which fire arc it is in.

PDTs always hit on a 4+ regardless of any modifiers.

Special Rules

Piercing (n) – Some weapons are particularly good at causing damage to a ships hull. When rolling to damage, modify the roll by + (n)

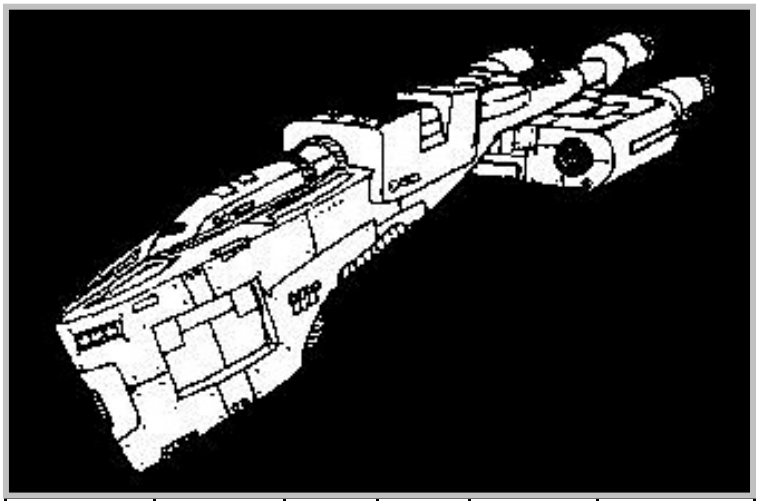
Blast (n) – Some weapons can cause multiple points of damage with a single hit. After rolling to hit, multiply the number of hits by (n)

Agile – Smaller ships tend to be a lot easier to maneuver, even at high velocity. A ship with this special rule can perform an additional 90 degree turn at any point during its move (even if travelling Full Speed Ahead.

Fleet List: The Corporation

Ship Illustrations by Jonathan Hicks

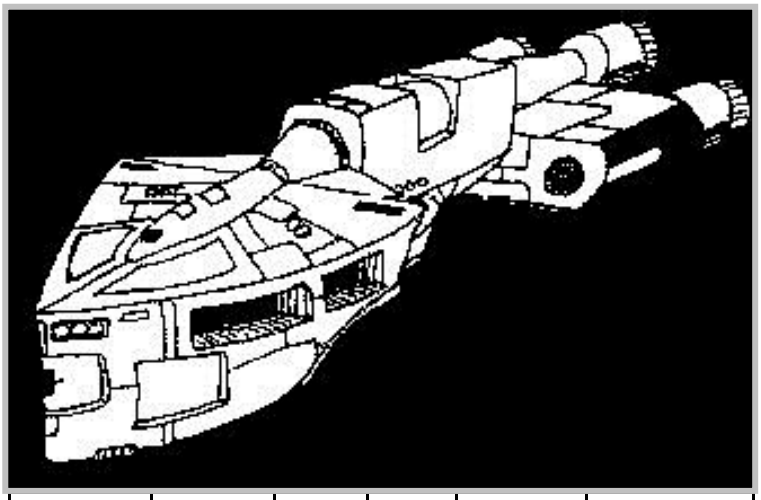
Vulture Class Light Cruiser – 60 points



Name	Speed	Hit	Def	Hull Points	Hull Integrity
Light Cruiser	10	4+	4+	6	9/11

Weapons: Laser Cannon [F/L/R], Small Torpedo Launcher [F], 1 PDT

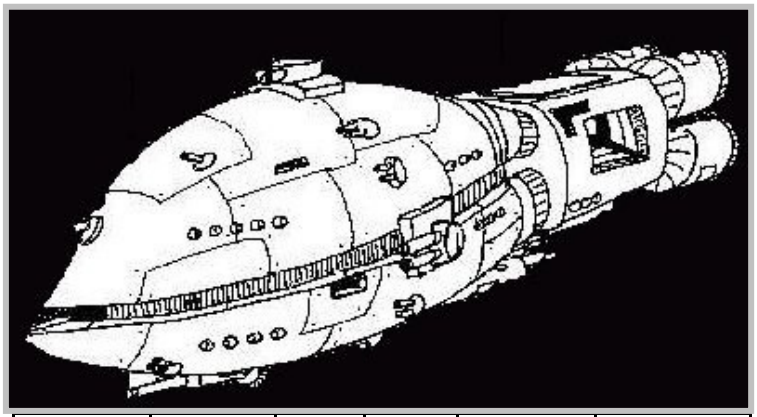
Eagle Class Cruiser – 100 points



Name	Speed	Hit	Def	Hull Points	Hull Integrity
Cruiser	8	4+	4+	8	9/11

Weapons: 2 Laser Cannons [F/L/R], Torpedo Launcher [F], 2 PDTs

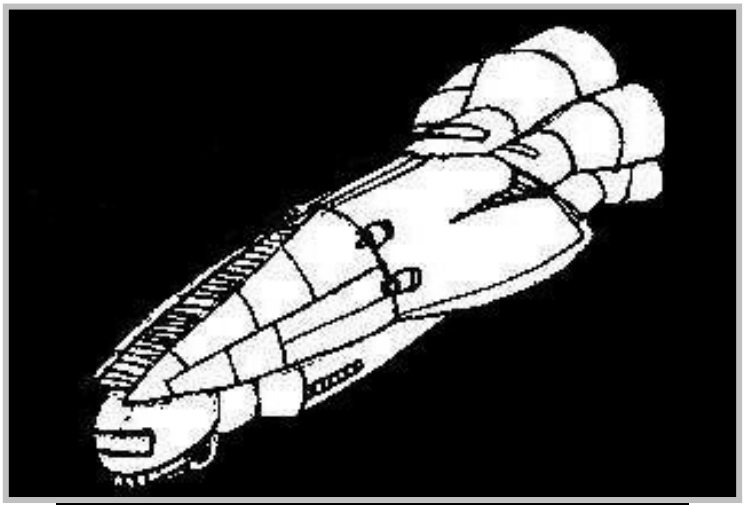
Phoenix Class Battleship – 150 points



Name	Speed	Hit	Def	Hull Points	Hull Integrity
Battle-ship	6	4+	5+	10	10/12

Weapons: Photon Cannon [F], 2 Laser Cannons [F/L/R], Torpedo Launcher [F], 3 PDTs

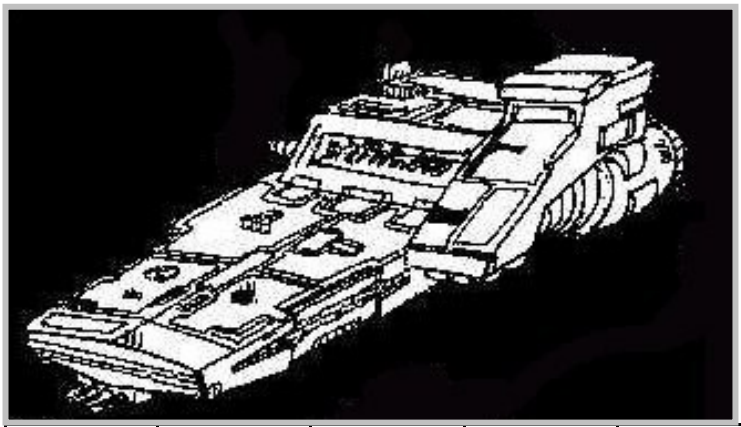
Wasp Class Fighter Squadron – 40 points



Name	Speed	Hit	Def	Hull Points
Fighter	12	4+	3+	1

Weapons: Burst Laser
Size: 5 Fighters

Hornet Class Torpedo Boat Squadron 30 points



Name	Speed	Hit	Def	Hull Points
Torpedo Boat	10	4+	4+	1

Weapons: Single Torpedo Launcher
Size: 3 Torpedo Boats

Corporation Weapons

Name	Range	Fire	Special
Laser Cannon	24”	5	-
Small Torpedo Launcher	12”	3	Piercing (1)
Torpedo Launcher	18”	6	Piercing (1)
Photon Cannon	36”	1	Piercing (3), Blast (D3)
Burst Laser	6”	2	-
Single Torpedo Launcher	6”	1	Piercing (1)
Point Defense Turret (PDT)	6”	1	Piercing (1), always hits on 4+

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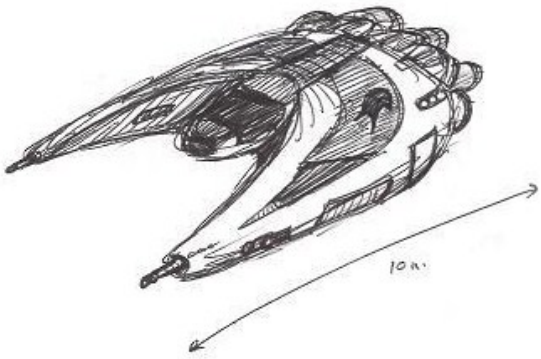

By Jonathan Hicks

THE WILEY OLD MAN RETURNS

By Lee Montgomery (SecuraCorp)

"Welcome Back Ladies and Gentlemen to this Nexus 3 Vidcast of the concluding round of the Peripheral Territory Series Tour, LIVE from beautiful Creshtus Minor!

"Beautiful might be pushing it a bit, Kev..."

"As it stands right now Dina, things are looking grim for the SecuraCorp Lawmen, trailing by two to the Cretan Horns and in desperate need of this Cup win if they hope to make the PTS Play-offs."

"You said it Kev, the Lawmen had really seemed to come alive in the early goings of the tournament, but now find themselves really struggling to keep pace with Cretan. A far cry off from the days when the old black, grey and gold of SecuraCorp used to always sit on top of the standings tables"

"OH! Another clanger from Wiggins, that's what, three missed Strikes in this game? I tell ya' Dina, I think the game has finally passed him by..."

"Yeah, but that shot was a fair bit harder than the earlier ones, not nearly as wide open either..."

The roar of the crowd, the contrast of the deep, dark Neodurium with the flashing lights of the arena and the thick smell of sweat and blood pervading through it all. This is what Wiggins lived for, or at least, he

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used to. Wiggins found himself scrambling back to mid-pitch, trying to regroup his team and recover from yet another unforced error. His breathing was getting ragged. It had been a hard fought tournament and his aging and injury-riddled body, modified or not, was starting to catch up to him.

All these cycles on the scene and where had it got him? Wiggins had once been a revered athlete, an icon on countless worlds. Wealth, women, fame....he had had it all and then some. But those days were long behind him. Here he was in some backwater, far removed from his glory days, long though they were. Even as he had aged, he had still been adored, was still able to cut it with the

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'young 'ens'. His combination of genetically enhanced athleticism and vast playing experience had earned him the moniker of "The Wiley Old Man". Season after season he found ways to do the unthinkable and wow the masses long past what should have been his prime. His late game heroics would leave announcers shouting that "The Wiley Old Man is Back At it Today!" Affectionately, fans turned the popular phrase into an acronym, and thus "The Wombat" was born.

However, it had been many seasons since Wiggins had heard that nickname, not since "THE MATCH" That fateful night saw him not only cost his team the championship, but also resulted in his exile to the minors.

And thus began a long slide into obscurity.

"Horns looking to exploit this turnover into some points, Minoa "The Bull" in at Keeper, "punts" the ball clear..."

"You know, I just think the Lawmen need some new blood. Why, I can't remember a time when Wiggins wasn't playing DreadBall, can you Dina? Even I grew up watching him play! Maybe it's finally time he hung it up..."

His late game heroics would leave announcers shouting that "The Wiley Old Man is Back At it Today!"

"Z-Nac for the Horns has the ball, deep in Lawmen territory now. Only one man to beat!"

"Oh No! Xantau—the Lawmen Keeper-- bites on the outside move!"

"He sure did, looks like Z-Nac has an unobstructed route to the Strike Zone...."

"Sure does, and looks like he's going in deep for the sure thing..."

Perhaps this is how it would end for him. Playing in some minor league series on an obscure planet. Why had he let it come to this? He could have went out on top, could

have had it all! Wiggins should have been even bigger than that prima donna van Dien—why, even that joker "The Hatchet" had his own ad-vids for O'Squirrely's! One mistake, one bad decision and his career, or what was left of it, had become a mess. His legacy forgotten.

"*SsssTRIIIIIIIIIIIKE! That's a 3-pointer from right-up close!*"

"*A Keeper just can't let himself get beat like that...*"

"*Yes, but when your teammates keep turning the ball over, the oppositions scoring opportunities increase, the shots start adding up. It takes a toll ...*"

But then, if he was gonna go out now, even in obscurity, Wiggins was going to go down swinging. Maybe he could muster up just one more flourish, just one more night of heroics to bask in the adulation, however small it may be and remember what it was like all those cycles ago. Maybe he had just a little magic still left in the tank after all.

"*Double Back!*" Wiggins shouted. In spite of the aching in his muscles and the screaming of his lungs, he forced himself into action. *"Xantau!"* He bellowed, *"Inside-Out! Don't give up the inside lanes, force 'em to the wall!"*

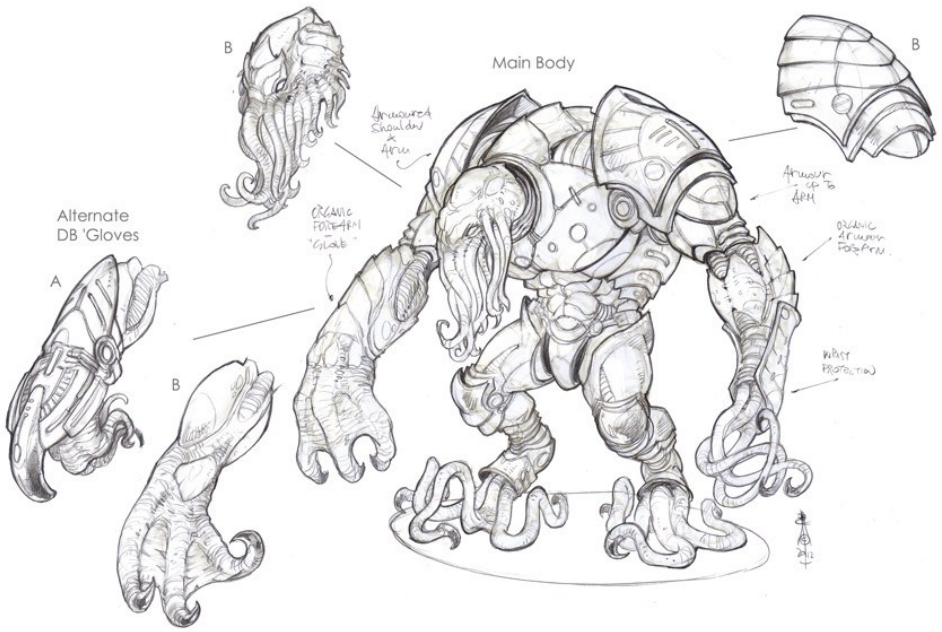
Xantau nodded his large helm in acknowledgment , the gold markings of the Lawmen glittering in the flashing lights of the packed arena, and quickly took up position at the top of the center Strike Zone.

"*Well, that really puts SecuraCorp on the ropes, down by 5 now...*"

One mistake, one bad decision and his career, or what was left of it, had become a mess. His legacy forgotten.

"*There goes the restart!*"

" *That ball is really humming now, look at it go!*



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"You know, the ball gets up to such high speeds and comes off the walls at such odd angles at times that it has periodically led to accusations of tampering…

"Which, of course, is ludicrous Dina! With an organization designed to promote and protect fair-play (and bottom-lines) in place like the DGB, how could any kind of such shenanigans take place? I mean, if we can't trust the integrity of professional sports, what kind of worlds would we be living on?!?"

"Oh my Kev! Looks like Migmer just took that ball straight away from Bienez! Good thing Wiggins seems to have gotten the Lawmen in some type of defensive formation..."

"He has always had quite the instinct for anticipating the flow of a game, so much so in fact, that some have even accused him of being psychic…

"He would just say experienced!"

The opposing Jack lurched forward with ball-in-glove and rumbled toward the central Strike Zone. Clearly, the Horns were looking to put the Lawmen away with a game-sealing 3-point Strike. Wiggins was having none of it and was in a full-out sprint across the pitch, feet furiously pounding the Neodurium (TM) to head off the attack. He passed behind Xantau, who was setting up hard inside on the incoming assault of their Strike Zone.

"I mean, if we can't trust the integrity of professional sports, what kind of worlds would we be living on?!?"

"Looks like Migmer has support to the outside, but look at Wiggins go! He is really flying!"

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"Don't forget Kev, Wiggins played Striker for many a season before moving into the Jack role..."

"Xantau is coming up hard inside, Migmer tries to dodge...and...NOTHING DOING! WOW! What a hit, the ball is loose!"

"That's how a Keeper gets it done Kev!"

"That a boy Xan!" cried Wiggins. He accelerated toward the loose ball that was careening toward

the wall, attempting to head off Z-Nac, the Horns Striker that had been running in support of Migmer.

With a last burst of effort, Wiggins hurled himself into the wall, solidly planting one foot on it and pushing off hard back toward the way he came. He deftly scooped up the ball in his glove on the rebound before Z-Nac could react.

"*Bienez, CATCH!"* shouted Wiggins. And in one smooth movement he stepped forcefully in toward the middle of the pitch and flung the ball to his Striker awaiting at the center line.

"*I ain't seen a move like that in awhile! A rebound scoop!?! Now that's old-school!"*

"*That's what you get with Wiggins, some old-fashioned, hard-nosed DreadBall"*

"*Looks like the Lawmen are making a play here, they've got three in the middle and look to be going deep..."*

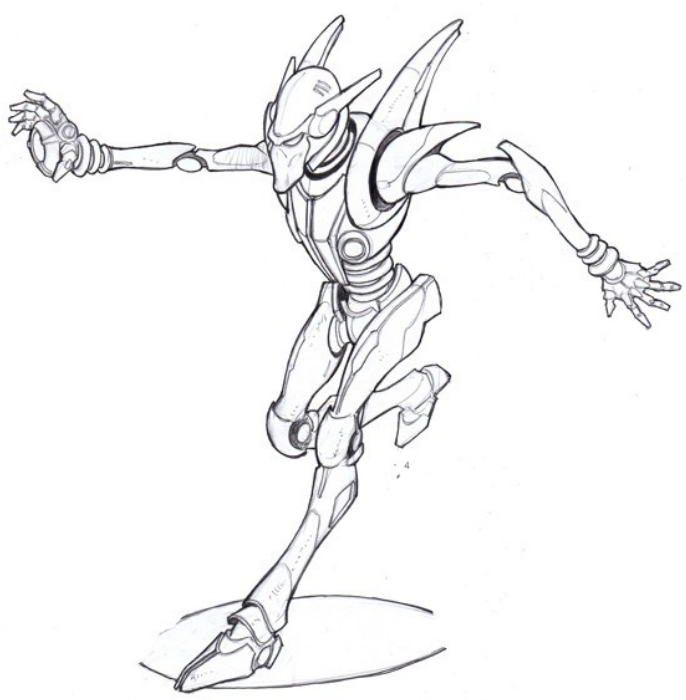
"*They sure are, must be aiming for a three-pointer, they really have the Horns on the run now scrambling for position...."*

"*They work the ball left, now right and...No! They off-load back to Wiggins coming up fast behind!"*

"*He is charging hard into the right Strike Zone..."*

"*Here's the shot..."*

"*STRIKE!"*



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"*Wow, that one really had some zip!"*

"*The ball is out on the restart and Man-o-Man has Cretan found themselves out of position here!"*

"I ain't seen a move like that in awhile! A rebound scoop!?! Now that's old-school!"

"*Quite right! They really got taken on that last play and over committed deep on that one"*

"*It's Wiggins with the ball again, the Lawmen have regained possession..."*

"*Looks like this one could get interesting*

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after all!"

Wiggins had the ball and was quickly moving his team into position.

"*Support right, RIGHT!"* he yelled. Wiggins hurled the titanium orb out to Bienez and drifted back towards the center of the pitch. The Horns were in a tizzy as they tried to regroup and press the attack after being caught out of alignment. They launched another full on assault to try and bring an end to the Lawmen possession.

Which, of course, is exactly what Wiggins wanted.

"*NOW! LOOPY-LEFT! NOW!"* Wiggins bellowed.

"*Wiggins offloads to Bienez, looks like they are taking it right..."*

"*Horns trying to regroup and boy are they putting on a full out press here..."*

"*UH OH! Bienez hits a wide open Wiggins at center-pitch and he's making a bee-line for the top of the left Strike Zone!"*

Wiggins' legs were churning at full-tilt as he approached the glowing tiles that marked his destination. He pulled up slightly and leapt into the air from the top of the zone....

Wiggins hurled the titanium orb out to Bienez and drifted back towards the center of the pitch.

"*Is that a Jump-shot?!?"*

"*STRIKE! A 2-pointer!"*

"*It was! I haven't seen a jump shot like that in 15 cycles!"*

"*Wiggins is really on the move!"*

"*He might not be the fastest, but he sure was a step ahead of them on that rush!"*

" *I dare say it, Dina, The Wiley Old Man is Back at it Today!"*

The crowd was starting to work it's way into a frenzy and the chanting was starting to grow.

"***WOM-BAT! WOM-BAT! WOM-BAT!"***

Wiggins felt a new surge of adrenaline flow through his body. There was no way they were going to lose now.

"*Is it going to be enough Kev? The Lawmen are still down by two and time is running out!"*

"WOW! Again, that uncanny 6th sense of The Wombat has given the Lawmen one more rush to work with here…"

"*Let's just see what The Wombat brings to the table..."*

The glowing mass of titanium came hurling down the centerline, but again, Wiggins was a step ahead of everyone else, having already anticipated were the ball would end up.

"*WOW! Again, that uncanny 6th sense of The Wombat has given the Lawmen one more rush to work with here..."*

"*Two will tie and Three will win, what do you think they are going to do here Kev?"*

"*Hard to say with The Wombat back in form, but I'd wager Wiggins will go for the win.."*

"*Looks like Cretan has reformed a 5-man screen and again are looking to pressure here"*

"*Looks like The Bull has planted himself in front of the central Strike Zone"*

Wiggins made the call to attack, *"4 Wide!".* Wiggins bolted down the middle of the pitch, his team mates running flat in support and wide on either side.

"*Looks like their keeping them stretched across the pitch here..."*

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"Here it comes, Bienez is looping in behind Wiggins..."

Wiggins deftly tossed the ball back to Bienez and continued bolting toward the central Strike Zone.

"What's this, the old "Slam and Jam play?!?"

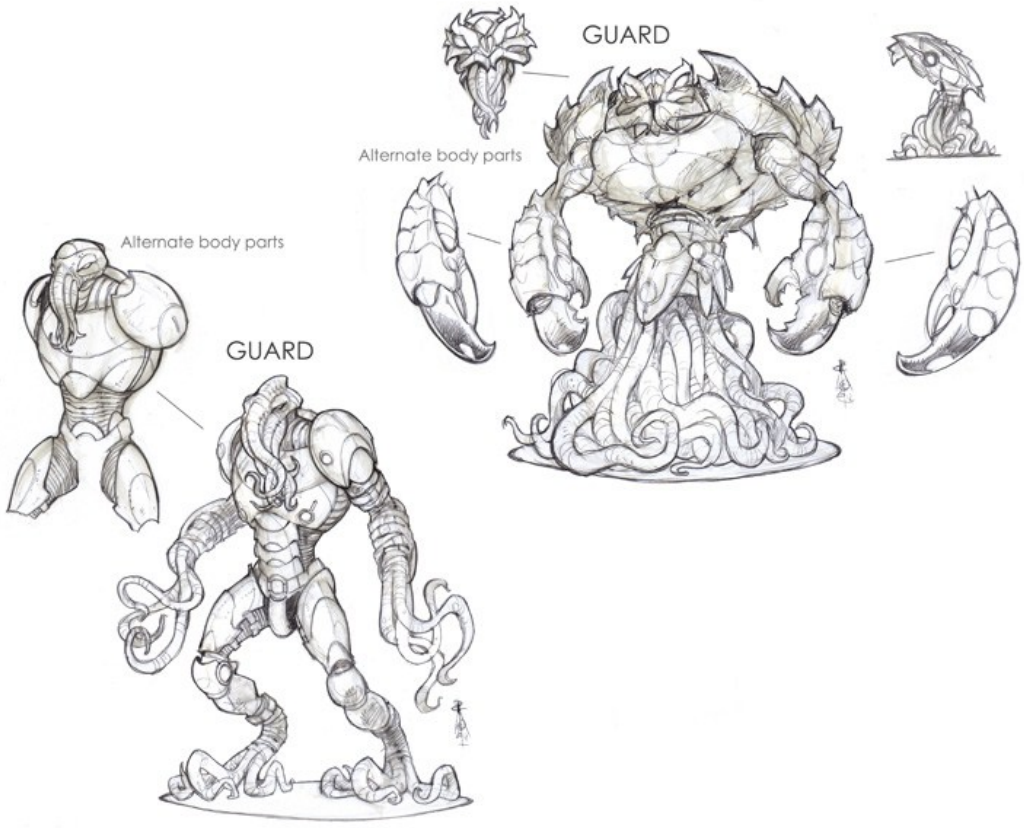
"Well, most people aren't old enough to remember that Wiggins started out as a Guard when he was a rookie.."

"But we're talking about Minoa The Bull in at Keeper here, those horns aren't just for decoration!"

"Well, remember that they are curved inward a bit and don't point directly forward. Not to mention the official DGB statement that "potentially dangerous, uncovered appendages are sprayed with a clear, non-staining, synthi-wax protective polyment to ensure the safety of all participants...."

Mind you, Minoa looked in no way like a Terran Bull. Except for the horns. And the raging temperament

Wiggins could smell the pungent musk of The Bull, who snorted in disgust and was stamping his hoof-like feet in agitation. Mind you, Minoa looked in no way like a Terran Bull. Except for the horns. And the raging temperament.



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"Think you're tough? Come get some, you big heifer!" Shouted Wiggins. Minoa bellowed in rage and began racing forward to meet the Jack head on.

"Wiggins looks to be attempting to clear the way for Bienez..."

"This looks like it's going to be a violent collision!"

"The crowd is loving it!"

Wiggins lowered his shoulder. Minoa put his head down and came on at full speed. Right at the

moment of impact, Minoa launched himself, along with a vicious right hook, straight at The Wombat's head.

"OH! Here it comes!"

Just as the meaty fist of Minoa was to make contact with Wiggins' jaw, he spun away from the blow, rolling back along the mighty outstretched arm of the Cretan Keeper.

"Wiggins is hi-NO! He spins clear! Minoa crumples in a heap!"

"What a whiff!"

"The Wombat wheels back in toward the middle of the pitch.."

"NOW!" called Wiggins, as he sprinted straight into the heart of the glowing mass of tiles that was the Horns central Strike Zone. Bienez lobbed a soft toss over the furious outstretched mess of fur that was The Bull. In one smooth motion, Wiggins caught the ball then immediately leapt and spun it forward at the shimmering target....

"Only seconds left..."

"Wiggins with the ball..."

"He shoots..."

"STRIKE! A 3-pointer at the buzzer! What a match!"

"The Lawmen win!"

"Looks like The Wombat is back to boot!"

Wiggins felt a renewal of purpose, a sense of clarity that he hadn't had for a long time. The crowd was going wild. His teammates were shouting in exultation. Maybe, just maybe, if he led this team back to the TPS Championship, and if he got the right sponsor, just maybe, he could get that DGB restriction lifted.

Wiggins was back, and this time, The Wombat was going out on top.

On HIS terms.▪

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LAZARUS

by Michael Grey

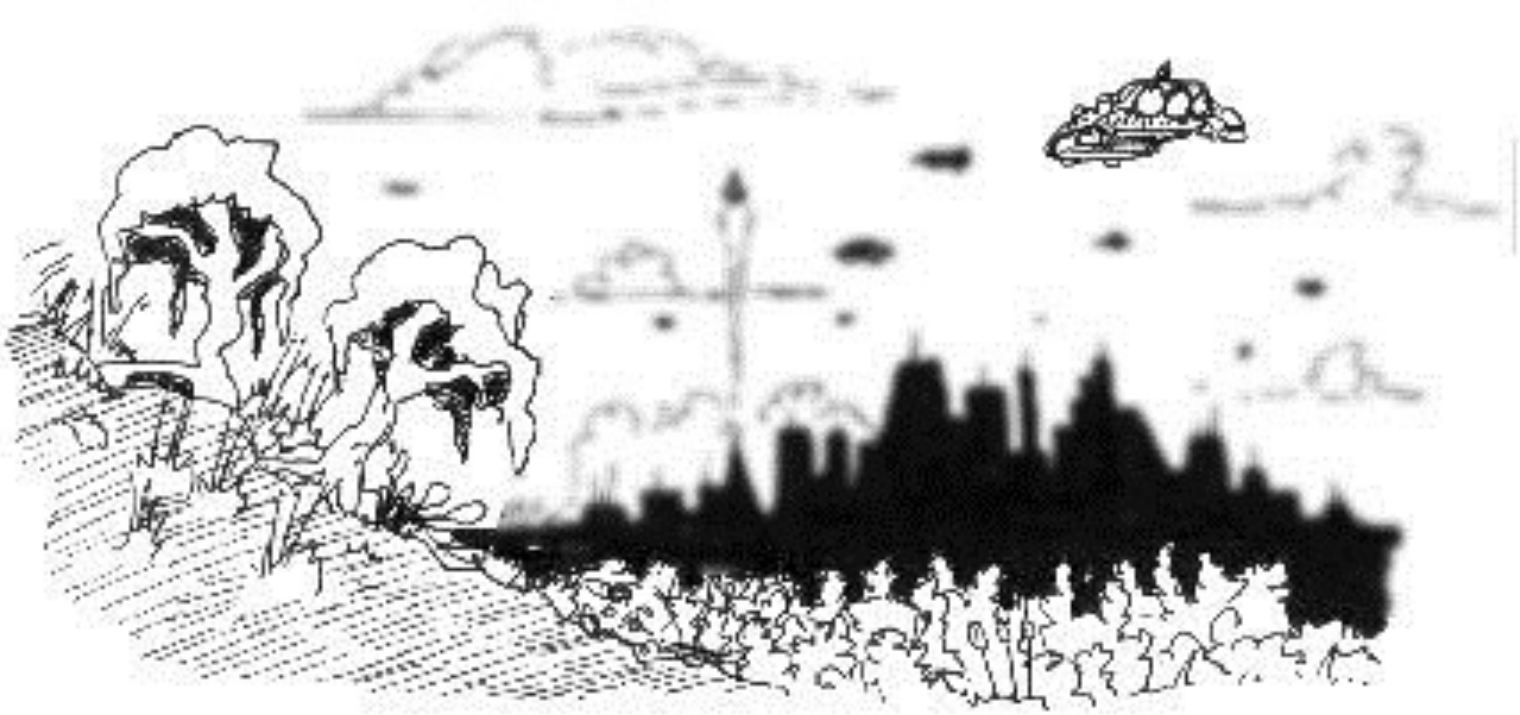
It was already dark outside. Either his timing was out or the Ministry had diverted power from the Lowside's day cycle to the Upside for their hot tubs and flyers. Almost certainly the latter, though he was not one to trust in probabilities.

In the scheme of things, however, it did not matter. He left the store, stepping over detritus left by the latest drain backup as if it were full light. Gangs already populated the streets, drawn from their holes by the promise of darkness. He crossed to the road's middle, walking equilaterally between groups on either side, ignoring and in turn ignored. It was too early for them to a bother a lone man, even if he did carry bags of food. It would still be hours before the first shots rang through Lowside.

He reached his building, its side only slightly spattered with lit windows. The rest resident to those who couldn't afford the power, or were too stupid or too wasted to steal it. Home. For the present.

The lobby door was off the hook, giving the hookers a warmer place to wait for the next trick. One crooked a knotted finger at him, more exhausted than alluring. He walked past, ignoring the bones prominent on her shoulders and the damp patches on her shirt.

For the briefest of moments he considered reaching into his bag and giving her a can of beans or potted meat. Something to help. But it was only for a moment. It would be



By Jonathan Hicks

gone before he reached the apartment; pawned for another hit of whatever her particular poison was, and then she would follow him around like a spurned dog, waiting for the next kick.

No. He did not need the attention.

The steps were climbed two at a time for nine flights, until he stood on his landing. As dark and dank as he left it that morning. Rust still ate through the welded wall sheets. The EMERGENCY EXIT sign sparked where an illegal hook-up bled power from the grid, its ozone mixing with the mildewed carpet to give this floor its particular odour.

Down the corridor, brown water compressing from the carpet where his boots trod, he paused just slightly halfway, leg mid-swing. To the casual observer it would barely be noticed, and he was on his way again within a beat.

By "Skolo"

The EMERGENCY EXIT sign sparked where an illegal hook-up bled power from the grid, its ozone mixing with the mildewed carpet to give this floor its particular odour.

While he was still three metres away the door unlocked in a solid clack with no external action from him, and swung open without the need to shift his hands from the grocery bags, swinging shut behind his heel.

Inside, the apartment was all dark shapes and grey outlines, benefiting only slightly from what halogens filtered through the lone window. He walked on surely, never brushing against the mouldy furniture, to the kitchen. The bags were placed on the counter and cupboards opened, all in a darkness most would find impossible.

"Hello, Lazarus," said a female voice.

"You're good," he said, still placing the cans according to food type. "Relocking the door would have been particularly complicated. And that was some nice work on the alarms, although you missed the tertiary. So, with all

By Boris Samec

that I would have to guess…" he placed the last can from one bag and turned, leaning against the countertop and facing the woman. "Agency?"

She sat in the easy chair. The only one in the apartment. Low, its zigzag thread worn smooth on the seat and back, and angled to where the occupant could see the window and door simultaneously. The choice was tactical, and told him as much as her ability to break past his alarms.

She nodded. "We have met, Agent Lazarus, although not in person."

He cocked his head, "Miss Dancer?"

I know you will appreciate just how important this is if we came for you. You are not the easiest person to find

She nodded again, short and precise, much like the rest of her. Her business suit was understated but immaculate, and her hair was pulled back to a strand-perfect bun. He could imagine her dusting the chair before she sat in it. "I apologise for disturbing your sabbatical, but I'm afraid something has come up."

"Something always does."

"I know you will appreciate just how important this is if we came for you. You are not the easiest person to find. You choose some interesting places for your safaris."

He kept his eyes on her the whole time, unblinking, gathering. She had remained still

so far, legs crossed at the knee, fingers interlaced casually on her abdomen. Her body language gave off quiet confidence. But the signs were there; a tension across her lips as she spoke, the minor tick of a forefinger. She was nervous, and whatever she was here for was important enough to see him in person. And his augments said she was disconnected from the net. Interesting…

He looked out of the window where the evening's first gunshots began to pepper the night. "I like to keep things engaging. Act incorrectly and the Lowside can be as dangerous as any jungle. And I have to make myself scarce, otherwise someone always turns up to cut things short."

She was nervous, and whatever she was here for was important enough to see him in person

"*You* are a member of the Council Protection Agency, Lazarus. You are ours to call on as we need."

"Perhaps next time I'll find a nice quiet asteroid. That should keep you away for a while longer."

"Agent you will listen, or would you prefer stasis containment until you remember your prerogatives?"

He looked at her, locking eyes until it was obvious she would not look away, and nodded.

"Good," she said. "Now, what do you know about Agent Caspar?"

His memory broke into action, retrieving the information as he spoke. "Caspar, Silus, M. Notional rank; Captain. Effective rank; Lieutenant Commander. Height; 186. Skin, hair and eye tone; variable. Last known sphere of operations; the Outer Perseus Arm. Mission aim; Classified."

"That is correct. Do you know Agent Caspar

By Jonathan Hicks

at all?"

"On a limited basis. We never worked together."

"Are you aware of his training and abilities?"

His head rested in the centre of a round machine, the size and complexity of a super-collider cross section

He paused, as much to run a search on his memory as wonder what she was getting at. "Only what's listed," he said eventually. "Why?"

"We need you to kill him."

And suddenly the net isolation was understandable.

"You want me to kill one of CPA's, one of our own, agents?"

"Hunt and kill, yes." His ocular vision sprung up with a handshake request from Miss Dancer, indicating she had files to share. "What you're receiving now is an order of magnitude above *top secret*, and I do not need to describe the penalties for divulging this information."

He accepted the handshake and his peripheral vision swam with overlapping images, documents and recordings. A cascade of data, too much for even him to take in in one glance. A word was made known to him, *Iapteus*. The mention of his triggered an awareness, like someone turning on the lights in a dark room. *Iapteus* was a security level, and it being known showed a ladder of similar codewords below; *Atlas, Prometheus, Astraeus*, all the way down to *Top Secret.*

By "Skolo"

The data stream brought with it some halting images. One was a pic file of someone he recognised as Agent Caspar, laying on a surgical slap, seemingly alive and unconcerned while his head rested in the centre of a round machine, the size and

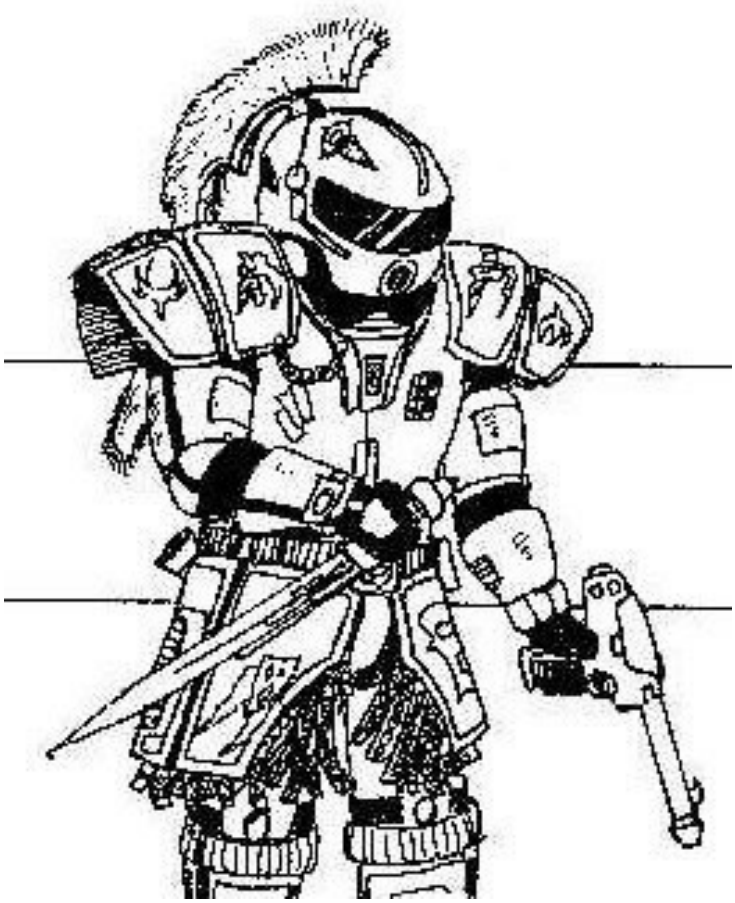
complexity of a super-collider cross section.

The second was a vid file. A tank, reinforced to hold the super heavy med gel it contained. Inside a shape, just on the other side of definable, floated, held static by tubes and wires. It shook once in a while, through the external stimulus of whatever the tubes brought or some reaction to its situation, Lazarus did not know. Although he suspected if it were the latter the image would take on a degree of the sinister.

His mind parsed the data and offered him a short prognosis, with a full report to go over later at leisure. He took the prognosis, read it, blinked, and looked questioningly at Dancer. She nodded.

"The project is so secret it does not even have a name." She noticed one of the chair's few remaining loose threads had attached itself to her sleeve. She pulled it free, held it to the light, then tossed it away, shaking her hand as if it might have contaminated her. "Its purpose was twofold. Firstly, for situations where an agent may need to be in two places at once, and for whatever reason a gene-level disguised proxy would not be enough. Secondly, where the survival of an agent was assessed to be less than likely, and their replacement too costly."

The original mind state always resides in the original body, Agent Lazarus



By Jonathan Hicks

"I understand. Is the copy implanted in the new body or the original?"

"The original mind state always resides in the original body, Agent Lazarus. It avoids any potential… errors to proliferate."

"Errors?" An eyebrow raised at the pause.

Miss Dancer's mouth curled in a smile which went nowhere near her eyes. "An outcome with the potential in an order of decimal magnitude so small I won't even bother to quote it. It is a relatively straightforward process, even if the science behind it is not. The subject's mind state is read and recorded. Every synapse, connection, memory, everything it contains and the way they speak to each other is copied and

By "Skolo"

imprinted onto the blank mind of a body grown in a vat for just that purpose.

"Sometimes the new body is altered to fit operational requirements, such as changing an agent's ethnicity or gender, but it's usual practice to keep the host similar to the original to avoid possible body shock or degradation to and agent's skills."

"I could see how that could be useful. Why isn't it used more?"

"A few reasons. The foremost that it is not a cheap procedure, nor quick. Also the greater its use, the greater the possibility of its tech becoming known. Even the Forge Fathers do not know this is possible. Lastly, if it became known that we were able to produce people at a whim, it would throw up some serious friction within the Sphere."

She let the sentence die. Lazarus sensed a frustrated teacher about her, and supplied the un-asked question.

"Because they're intelligent."

She nodded, another artificial smile his reward. "Some of the more libertarian societies in the Sphere would classify these assets as people, given that they are self aware and cognisant."

"And because you send them to live on a farm afterwards," he deadpanned.

She smiled again, this time chillingly sincere. "All assets are liquidated after operational realisation."

If it became known that we were able to produce people at a whim, it would throw up some serious friction within the Sphere

"Indeed," he said. "Are they aware of their impending reward?"

"Their very existence is on a need-to know basis-"

"And they don't need to know?"

"They are not people, Agent. They are briefed as if they are the original in a

temporary body to reduce the risks of losing focus, and to ensure they return for 'debriefing'." The inverted commas dropped like tombstones into the sentence.

"Some may call that a tad ruthless, Miss Dancer."

"Our business is the safeguarding of the Sphere's continued future, Agent Lazarus. Not in being nice."

He accepted the reprimand with the minimal obeisance required. "And now you're here. Is it safe to assume a copy of Agent Caspar has absconded?"

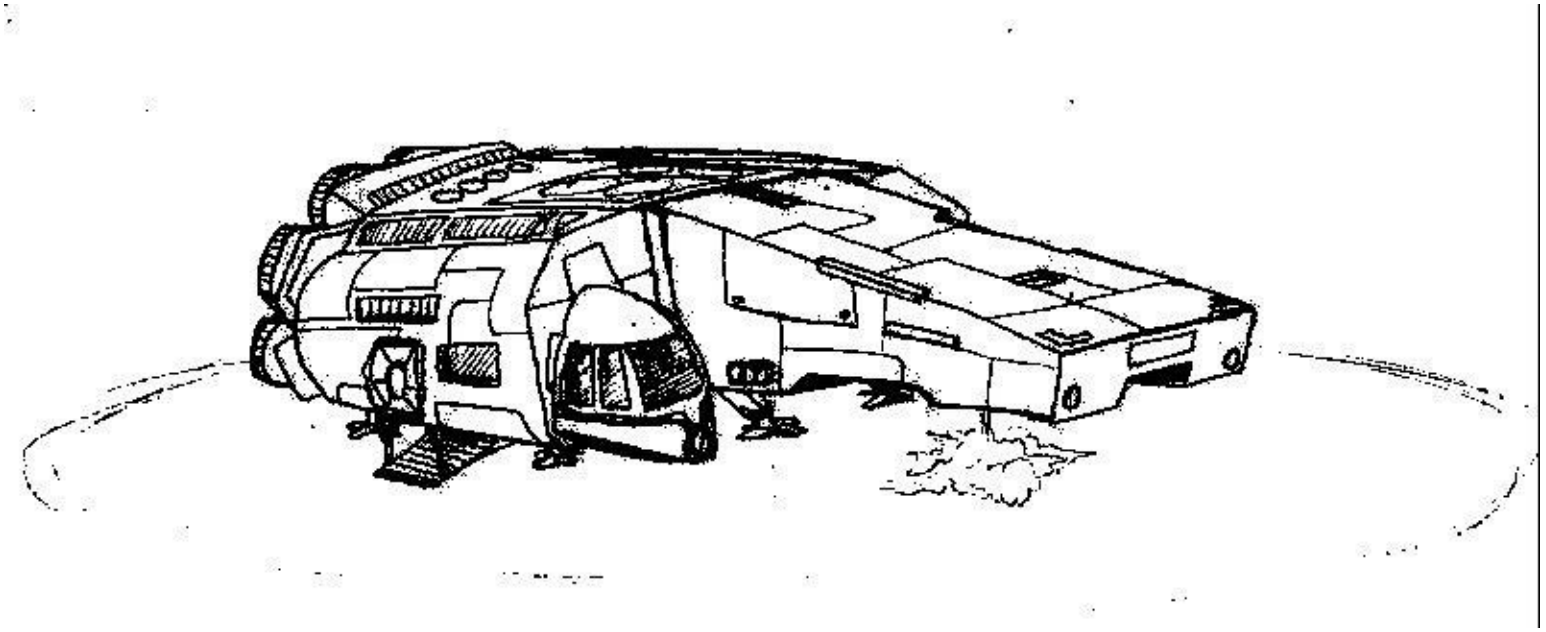
"It's safe," she nodded. "Agent Caspar's Secondary, as they classification goes, did not report in five Terran cycles ago, and has failed to respond to further hails. Our intelligence shows the Secondary is still active and moving freely, and we can only assume it has not intention of returning. The target requires termination and all its physical evidence destroyed before it can fall into another's hands."

The target requires termination and all its physical evidence destroyed before it can fall into another's hands

Lazarus cocked his head slightly to see her from a different angle. "What are you not telling me, Miss Dancer?"

She shifted under his gaze. A less complimentary way to put it would be *squirmed under institutionalised embarrassment*.

She began slowly, "The reason we believe this occurred is because the Secondary's brain was not the same shape as Agent



By Jonathan Hicks

Caspar's original."

Lazarus blinked. "Excuse me?"

"Agent Caspar was assigned to investigate the tech leap in the Hydronas systems. The increase in their scientific understanding is hampering House Phrissure's attempts at integrating them into the Sphere. And this happening just as the Trade Fleet Orieum arrived cannot be mere coincidence."

The system and the unexpected arrival from subspace of the Trading Fleet was well enough reported on, even in the civilian channels, that Lazarus did not have to access his archives to realise, "You copied him into a *Forge Father?*"

By Boris Samec

"*Imprinted* is the accepted nomenclature, but essentially yes."

Lazarus was uncharacteristically speechless. The idea that the Agency would try and infiltrate one of the secretive galactic societies. The face, the very gall, of an attempt to break into a civilisation whose every purpose spoke of a desire for a reason to wage war on the Sphere, and most likely wipe them out in the process, was frighteningly brazen.

He was impressed.

"And how did Caspar take to being placed in a one point five metre body?"

"He went AWOL," she said evenly, "I think that tells us all we need to know. We're assuming the Secondary found out its true

And how did Caspar take to being placed in a one point five metre body?

nature, either through its own deductions or, at the worst, *worst*, case scenario, the Forge Fathers know of the program and fed the information to foil the operation and spread further problems. If so, they succeeded."

"A little Forge Father version of Caspar running around. That would be funny were it not so serious."

Dancer gave him a further hint of teacher with another reprimanding look. "With what I have told you, and the information now in your files, I think you understand the situation's gravity."

He nodded, giving the news the solemnity it deserved, and then turned back to stocking the shelves, ignoring Dancer's indignity.

"Is this the time you ask if I have any other questions?" he said.

"I… yes."

"Is Caspar expected to have assets of his own in place? A support network? Caches?"

"He is. Agent Caspar is well known for his operational thoroughness. He is being debriefed as we speak for more details."

"So I would have to move quickly. One more question."

"Yes?"

"Have you always referred to us as *it*?"

The gun was a primitive thing, a chemically-projected slug fired down a rifled barrel.

Lazarus pulled the pistol, one of many secreted about the apartment, from the cupboard's false partition, turned, and fired.

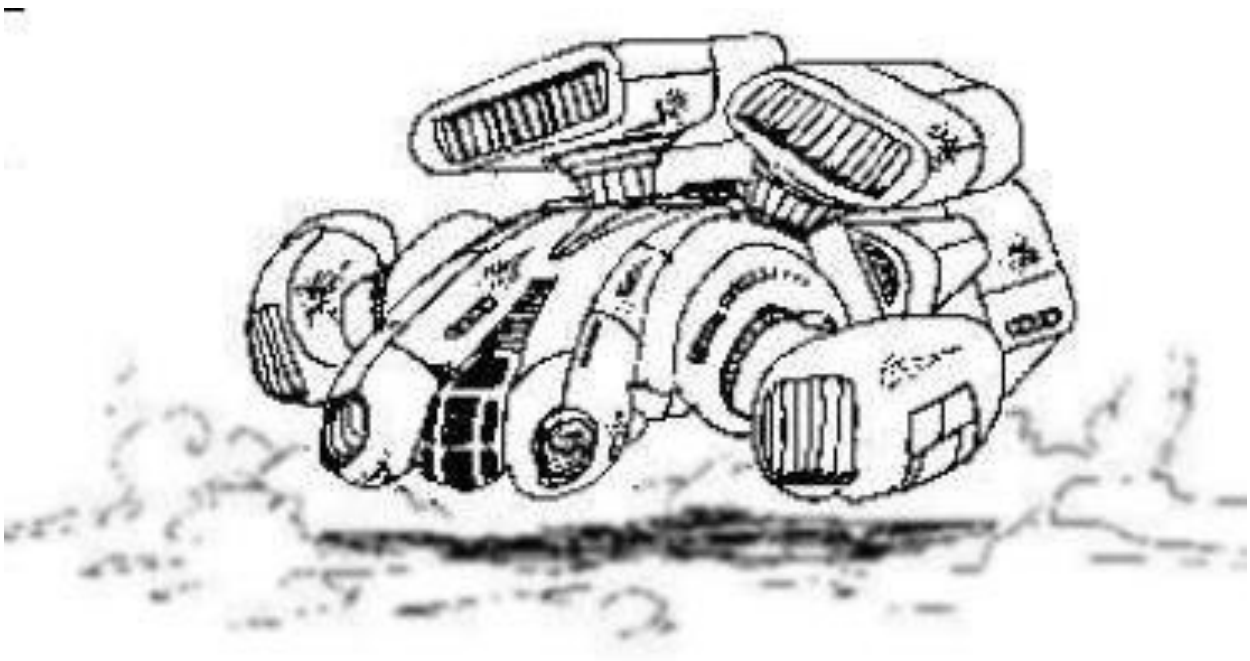
The gun was a primitive thing, a chemically-projected slug fired down a rifled barrel. It was mechanically brutal, but effective; punching Dancer further into the chair's fabric.

He had time to appreciate the look on her face; incomprehension, to realisation, to shock, all within the time it took for his question to register and the shot to puncture her left breast, where a coin sized hole now leaked a red line down her tailored suite.

She still looked at him. Mouth open, working silently around a situation she could not accept was happening.

He fired again, this time into her forehead, snapping her neck back and nearly tipping the chair. By the time its legs found equilibrium and fell back, the cordite smell

By "Skolo"



By Jonathan Hicks

was beginning to fade and the report was long gone. Just another gunshot lost in the night.

Her eyes remained open, the shock of the last few seconds still evident on them as she stared eternally at the mottled ceiling. In any normal operation he would have closed them, a final act of respect for an honoured enemy. But her last comment was still raw in his mind, and they remained open.

Well well. Old Caspar had a Secondary. That was *interesting*.

He ran a quick inventory of the apartment while he checked to see what contacts he had in the Perseus arm. He would have to be quick. Miss Dancer would soon be missed, and it would not be long before another agent would be on Caspar, and now his, trail.

But still, it would be worth it to bring another into the fold.

His subsystem finished the inventory. There was nothing in the apartment which would risk giving away who Dancer met with. The security would scream *Agency* but there was no time to take that apart.

He pocketed the pistol and went to leave, pausing at Dancer's body.

His augments told him she was dead, but still he felt her pulse. It paid to certain in these situations. And he really wasn't one to trust in probabilities.

The end▪

For more stories like this, visit Michael's blog at www.michaelgrey.com.au

Fireball

Phase: Shoot

Fiery beams of energy shoot from the caster's hands, incinerating all in their path.

Roll 5 dice for this ranged attack rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This attack has a range of 24", always hits on 4+ (regardless of modifiers) and is Piercing (1).

Burning Blade

Phase: Melee

Like the scream of a furnace the caster's weapon bursts explosively into flame.

Roll 1D6 when you activate the caster in the Melee phase but before making attacks. On a 3+ the caster gains 1 additiona attack with the Blast (1D6+1) rule.

Flame Burst

Phase: Shoot

Roiling flame spews from the caster's mouth, sending the enemy shrieking in pain.

Roll 8 dice for this ranged attack rather than the Attacks value of the unit. This attack has a range of 12" and always hits on 4+, regardless of any modifier.

Molten Curse

Phase: Move

Cinders fly as the caster spits out a sulphurous curse, melting enemy weapons.

Roll 1D6 after issuing the caster orders. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 12" suffers -1 to damage on melee and ranged attacks until the beginning of your next turn.

Blazing Stag

Phase: Move

Unnatural heat infuses enemy armour, burning them as the caster's allies strike.

Roll 1D6 after issuing the caster orders. On a 3+ all attacks against one enemy unit within 12" gains +1 to melee and ranged damage until the beginning of your next turn.

By Doug Newton-Walters

Ice Gale

Phase: Melee

An unnatural sleet storm forces the enemy backwards.

Roll 1D6 at the end of your Melee Phase. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 12" is moved 1D6+1" away from the caster (maintaining facing).

Freeze

Phase: Shoot

Creeping ice grips the foe, freezing their blood and slowing their movements.

Roll 5 dice rather than using the unit's Attacks value. It has a range of 24", always hits on 4+ (ignoring modifiers) and reduces the target's Speed by 1 per die until your next turn.

Hailstorm

Phase: Shoot

Icicles of dark ice rain from the sky, impaling and tearing the foe apart.

Roll 5 dice rather than using the unit's Attacks value. It has a range of 12"-24", always hits on 4+ (ignoring modifiers) and is Piercing (1). You may target a unit you can't see, but you need 5+ to hit.

Hoarfrost

Phase: Melee

Blade-sharp crystals sprout around the caster's allies, impaling the advancing enemy.

Roll 1D6 at the end of your Melee Phase. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" counts as defending an obstacle from all directions until the beginning of your next turn.

Darkvoid

Phase: Move

All heat drains from the air, enveloping the enemy in a freezing darkness.

Roll 1D6 at the end of your Move Phase. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 24" receives an additional -1 to hit.

By Doug Newton-Walters

Mirage

Phase: Shoot

The foe fights themselves in panic as ephemeral foes drift amongst them.

Roll 1 die rather than using the unit's attack value. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 12" inflicts 1D6 attacks on themselves in melee.

Witch Eye

Phase: Move

The caster's second sight grants their allies unearthly accuracy.

Roll 1D6 at the end of your Move Phase. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 6" receives the indirect fire rule until the beginning of your next turn.

Scry

Phase: Move

The future is laid bare before the caster, granting their allies uncanny luck.

Roll 5 dice at the end of your Move Phase. Each 4+ grants one friendly unit within 6" one re-roll to attack or damage in melee and at range until the beginning of your next turn. Choose after they roll.

Curse

Phase: Melee

A vile epithet flies from the caster's lips, sending the enemy reeling.

Roll 5 dice at the end of your Melee Phase. Each 4+ forces one enemy unit within 6" to re-roll one attack or damage roll in melee and at range until the beginning of your next turn. Choose after they roll.

Ether Bolt

Phase: Shoot

Starlight arcs down, drawn to the heavy armour of the foe.

Roll 1 die rather than using the unit's attack value. On a 4+ one enemy unit within 48" takes 1D6+1 hits. Only damage rolls that roll UNDER the target's Defence cause damage.

By Doug Newton-Walters

Heal

Phase: Shoot

Soothing energy fortifies the caster's allies, repairing their minds and bodies.

Roll 3 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This attack can only target friendly units (even in melee), has a range of 12", always hits on 4+ and each hit removes 1 point of damage.

Invigorate

Phase: Shoot

The vitality of the wild fills the troops, spurring them on.

Roll 4 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This may only target friendly units, has a range of 12", always hits on 4+ and each hit moves the unit straight forward 1" (an enemy unit touched is Charged).

Wild Wrath

Phase: Melee

The forest's anger manifests as slashing roots and vines, tearing at the foe.

Roll 1D6 at the beginning of your Melee Phase. On a 3+ any enemy unit that moves within 6" of the caster counts as moving into a Living Forest until the beginning of your next turn.

Wolf's Fang

Phase: Melee

The primal force of the predator sends the caster's allies into a frenzy.

Roll 5 dice at the beginning of your Melee Phase. This may only target friendly units (even in melee), has a range of 6", always hits on 4+ and each hit grants the target 1 additional attack for that phase.

Hawk's Speed

Phase: Move

The caster instils their comrades with lightning fast avian reflexes.

Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" may perform a free Change Facing order and does not count as having Flanks or a Rear until the beginning of your next turn.

By Doug Newton-Walters

Soul Shrive

Phase: Shoot

Insubstantial blades cut through the enemy's soul.

Roll 3 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit. This attack has a range of 12" and each 4+ rolled inflicts 1 point of damage on the target, ignoring defence.

Drain

Phase: Melee

The enemy's fighting strength is drawn from their bodies.

Roll 5 dice at the end of your Melee Phase. Each 4+ removes one attack from an enemy unit within 6" until the beginning of your next turn.

Bolster

Phase: Melee

Allied spirits are boosted by the caster's power.

Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" causes a -1 modifier on any Nerve tests made against it until the beginning of your next turn. This is in addition to any other modifiers.

Shroud

Phase: Move

Allied troops are briefly concealed in the spirit realm.

Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" is removed from the table (leave a marker), returning to the same place at the beginning of your next turn, moving as little as possible.

Terrorise

Phase: Move

Soul-sapping energy cuts through the enemy, sending them running or killing them on the spot.

Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ roll a Nerve test on one enemy unit within 6". This is in addition to any Nerve tests it may have to make during the rest of the turn.

By Doug Newton-Walters

Reanimate

Phase: Shoot

Plants whither and animals die as the caster powers the corpses of the dead.

Roll 3 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit This attack can only target friendly units (even in melee), has a range of 12", always hits on 4+ and each hit removes 1 point of damage.

Dark Surge

Phase: Shoot

The caster drives their minions forward by force of will.

Roll 8 dice rather than using the Attacks value of the unit This may only target friendly Shambling units, has a range of 12" and each hit moves the unit straight forward 1" (an enemy unit touched is Charged).

Corpse Bomb

Phase: Melee

Concentrating corrupted energy in his minions, the caster causes them to explode, killing the enemy.

Roll 1D6 at the beginning of your Melee Phase. On a 3+ one friendly unit within 12" suffers 1D6 damage and inflicts the same number of Crushing Strength (1) hits on one enemy unit in melee with them.

Resurrection

Phase: Move

As the enemy are slaughtered the caster's power increases allowing him to create new forces on the battlefield.

Mark the caster for each enemy unit Routed within 12" (max 3). Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders (using up all markers). 1 marker = 6+, 2 = 5+, 3 = 4+. Success creates a Skeleton Troop within 12" of the caster, which acts as normal.

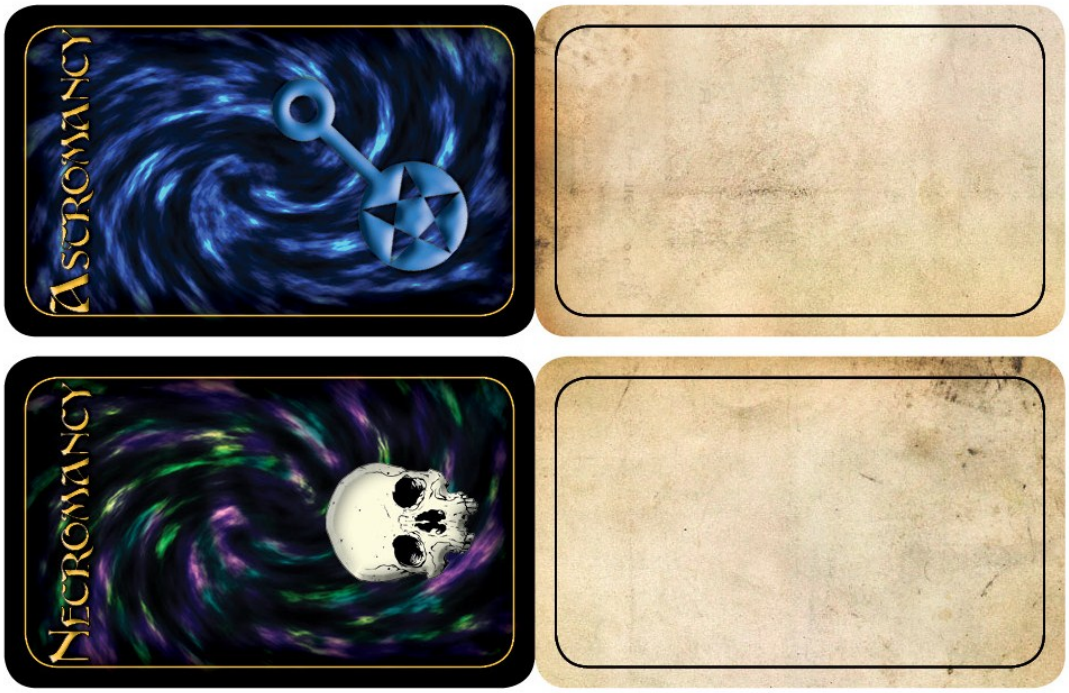
Death Snare

Phase: Move

The enemy are attacked by the corpses of their own comrades as they fall to the ground.

Roll 1D6 when issuing the Caster orders. On a 3+ one enemy unit within 12" suffers an additional attack hitting on 5+ for each point of damage they suffer until the beginning of your next turn. Roll when the damage is caused.

By Doug Newton-Walters



By Doug Newton-Walters

By "imm0rtal reaper"

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